

P R E F A C E.

THE Mohawk Valley in which Sir William Johnson spent his adult life (1738—1774) was the fairest portion of the domain of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. In this valley I lived nine years, seeing on every side traces or monuments of the industry, humanity, and powerful personality of its most famous resident in colonial days. From the quaint stone church in Schenectady which he built, and in whose canopied pews he sat, daily before my eyes, to the autograph papers in possession of my neighbours ; from sites close at hand and traditionally associated with the lord of Johnson Hall, to the historical relics which multiply at Johnstown, Canajoharie, and westward, — mementos of the baronet were never lacking. His two baronial halls still stand near the Mohawk. I found that local tradition, while in the main generous to his memory, was sometimes unfair and even cruel. The hatreds engendered by the partisan features of the Revolution, and the just detestation of the savage atrocities of Tories and red allies led by Johnson's son and son-in-law, had done injustice to the great man himself. Yet base and baseless tradition was in no whit more unjust than the sectional opinions and

hostile gossip of the New England militia which historians have so freely transferred to their pages.

In the following pages no attempt at either laudation or depreciation has been made. My purpose has been simply to set forth the actions, influence, and personality of Sir William Johnson, to show the character of the people by whom he was surrounded, and to describe and analyze the political movements of his time. I confess I have not depicted New York people in the sectional spirit and subjective manner in which they are so often treated by New England writers. The narrow and purely local view of some of these who have written what is called the history of the United States, greatly vitiates their work in the eyes of those who do not inherit their prejudices. Having no royal charter, the composite people of New York, gathered from many nations, but instinct with the principles of the free republic of Holland, were obliged to study carefully the foundations of government and jurisprudence. It is true that in the evolution of this Commonwealth the people were led by the lawyers rather than by the clergy. Constantly resisting the invasions of royal prerogative, they formed on an immutable basis of law and right that Empire State which in its construction and general features is, of all those in the Union, the most typically American. Its historical precedents are not found in a monarchy, but in a republic. It is less the fruit of English than of Teutonic civilization.

Living also but a few yards away from the home of Arendt Van Curler, the "Brother Corlaer" of Indian

tradition, and immediately alongside the site of the old gate opening from the palisades into the Mohawk country, I could from my study windows look daily upon the domain of the Mohawks, — the places of treaties, ceremonies, and battles, of the torture and burning of captives, and upon the old maize-lands, even yet rich after the husbandry of centuries. Besides visiting many of the sites of the Iroquois castles, I have again and again traversed the scenes of Johnson's exploits in Central New York, at Lake George, in Eastern Pennsylvania, and other places mentioned in the text. With my task is associated the remembrance of many pleasant outings as well as meetings with local historians, antiquarians, and students of Indian lore. I have treated more fully the earlier part of Johnson's life which is less known, and more briefly the events of the latter part which is comparatively familiar to all. I trust I have not been unfair to the red men while endeavouring to show the tremendous influence exerted over them by Johnson; who, for this alone, deserves to be enrolled among the Makers of America.

My chief sources of information have been the Johnson manuscripts, which have been carefully mounted, bound, and are preserved in the State Library at Albany. They were indexed by my friends, the late Rev. Dr. H. A. Homes, and Mr. George R. Howell, the accomplished secretary of the Albany Institute. To the former I am especially indebted. The printed book to which I owe special obligations is Mr. William L. Stone's "Life and Times of Sir William

Johnson, Bart." These two superbly written octavo volumes, richly annotated and indexed, make any detailed life of Johnson unnecessary, and form a noble and enduring monument of patient scholarship.

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W. E. G.

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