

CHAPTER II.

JOHNSON AS AN INDIAN TRADER.

THERE is probably no good foundation for the local tradition, mentioned by Gen. J. Watts De Peyster, in his *Life of Gen. John Johnson* (Preface, p. ii, note), that the family name of William Johnson was originally "Jansen, and that the first who bore it and settled in Ireland was a Hollander, who, like many of his countrymen, went over afterward with William III. in 1690, won lands and established themselves in Ireland." The subject is not mentioned in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and but slightly treated in English works of reference, while he has been unjustly slighted by American writers of history. According to his own account, William Johnson was born in Smithtown, County Meath, near Dublin, Ireland, in 1715.¹ His mother was Anne Warren, sister of the brothers Oliver and Peter, who became famous officers in the British Navy; and his father, Christopher John-

¹ The young and charming Lord James Radcliffe, Earl of Derwentwater, the idol of the Jacobites, was beheaded 24th of February, 1716; that is, on the very day, it is claimed by Col. T. Bailey Myers, that Sir William Johnson was born, and the wild fervour of a Jacobite loyalty was still alive when Sir John was a boy. — DE PEYSTER'S *Life of Gen. John Johnson*, *Intro.*, p. xvi.

son, Esq. Writers and biographers enlarge upon the ancient and honourable lineage of his mother's family, but say little about his father's. To an American this matters less than to those who must have a long line of known ancestry, real, reputed, or manufactured.

After some schooling at a classical academy, William was trained to a mercantile career. When about twenty-two years old, he fell in love with a lass whom his parents refused to permit him to marry. This obstacle, like a pebble that turns the course of the rivulet that is to become a great river, shaped anew his life. The new channel for his energies was soon discovered.

His uncle, Capt. Peter Warren, R. N., who had just returned from a cruise, heard of his nephew's unhappy experience, and made him the offer of a position promising both wealth and adventure. Land speculation was then rife; and Captain Warren, like many other naval officers, had joined in the rush for lucre by buying land in the fertile Mohawk Valley. This was in addition to land which was part of his wife's dowry, so that his estate was large, amounting, it is said, to fifteen thousand acres. He appointed young Johnson his agent, to work his farm and sell his building-lots. The young Irishman at once responded to the proposition. He crossed the Atlantic, and promptly reported in New York.

Captain Warren, then about thirty years old, had married Susan, the oldest daughter of Stephen De Lancey; and it was probably to the old house, then thirty-

eight years old, which still stands (in which Washington took farewell of his generals in 1783), that the young Irishman came. He was possessed of a fine figure, tall and strong, was full of ambition and energy, with a jovial temper, and a power of quick adaptation to his surroundings. In short, he was a typical specimen of that race in which generous impulses are usually uppermost, and one of the mighty army of Celtic immigrants who have helped to make of the American people that composite which so puzzles the insular Englishman to understand.

New York and Albany people were already getting rich by inland as well as foreign trade, and the naval officer wished to invest what cash he could spare from his salary or prize money in a mercantile venture, to be begun at first on a modest scale in a frontier store. "Dear Billy," as his uncle addressed him in his letters, was not long in discovering that the ambition of nearly every young man was to get rich, either in the inland fur or West India trade, so as to own a manor, work it with negro slaves, and join in the pomp and social splendour for which the colony was already noted. It is more than probable that the ambition to be rich and influential was strongly reinforced during his stay on Manhattan Island.

The journey north, made according to the regular custom, was by sloop up the Hudson, past the Palisades, the Highlands, the Catskills, and the Flats, to Albany. After a few days in the only municipality north of New York, — a log city with a few smart brick houses, — spent in laying in supplies, the young

immigrant would pass through the pine-barrens, and after a day's journey reach the State Street gate of palisaded Schenectady.

In the house of the tapster, or innkeeper, he would probably stay all night. He would find the Street of the Martyrs (so named after the massacre of 1690), and of the Traders, together with Front, Ferry, Church, and Niskayuna Streets, lined with comfortable, one-storied, many-gabled dwellings, with here and there neat houses, all or partly of brick. Each house stood with its cosey bivalve door, shut at the bottom to keep out pigs and chickens and to keep in the babes, and open at the top to admit light and air. The scrupulously neat floors spoke of the hereditary Dutch virtue of cleanliness. On the table could be seen a wealth of plain but wholesome food, such as few farmer-folk in the old countries of Europe could boast of. The bill of fare would include the well-cured hams for which "the Dorp" was famous, all kinds of savoury products of the hog, besides every sort of bread, pie, cake, and plain pastry, baked to a shining brown in the ample ovens of stone or brick, which swelled like domes outside of the houses, at the rear of the kitchens. Savoury and toothsome were the rich "crullers" which Captain Croll, the good church-elder and garrison-commander of Rensselaerwyck, had invented during a winter-season of meat-famine. On many a house veered iron weather-cocks, especially on the few brick fronts monogrammed with dates in anchors of iron; while on the new church, only four years old, but the third in the his-

tory of the growing town, glittered the cock of Saint Nicholas in gilt. It rested over a belfry which held a most melodious bell, cast at Amsterdam, in dear old "Patria," in the rim of which, as well-founded tradition insisted, many a silver guilder, spoon, and trinket had been melted. Perhaps Johnson, like many a European and even New England militiaman, did not understand why the Dutch built their stone fortress-like churches at the intersection of two streets. Some even hinted at stupidity; but the Dutchmen, for the same reason that they loopoled the walls, so located their chief public buildings at the centre of the village as to be able to sweep the cross streets with their gun-fire in case of an attack by French or Indians, or both.

In Schenectady, Johnson would find that many of the men were away in the Indian country, with their canoes and currency of strouds, duffels, and trinkets, trading for furs. He would soon learn that many could speak the Indian tongue, some of the younger men and girls being excellent interpreters; while he would notice that wampum-making, or "seewant," for money, made by drilling and filing shells, was a regular and legitimate industry. Possibly the young churchman may have stayed over a Sunday, and in the large stone edifice, capable of seating over six hundred persons, heard, if he did not understand, the learned Domine Reinhart Erichzon preach. After the liturgy and psalms, read by the clerk or fore-reader, the domine, in gown and bands, ascended the wineglass-shaped pulpit to deliver his discourse.

In any event, whether Johnson's stay was long or short in the Dorp, we should see him making exit through the north gate, and either going landward along the Mohawk, which is hardly possible, or, as is more probable, loading his goods and outfit on one of the numerous canoes always ready, and rowing or being rowed up the river. The twenty-four miles or so of distance could be easily covered, despite the rifts and possible portages, in a single day. Evening would find him, either in camp on the new estate or hospitably lodged in some log-house of the Dutch or German settlers. He was now in the heart of what the Dutch have been wont to call the *Woestina*, or wilderness, but which was now too much settled to be any longer so spoken of, — the term beginning to be then, as it is now, restricted to a locality near Schenectady.

Warren's Bush, or Warren's Burg, was the name of the farm which the young Irishman was to cultivate. Warrensburg was the written name, but almost any new settlement was usually spoken of as "bush." It lay on the south side of the Mohawk, some distance east of the point where the creek, fed by the western slopes of the Catskills, empties into the river, and was named Schoharie, from the great mass of driftwood borne down. No more fertile valleys than these, watered by the rain or melted snows of the Catskills and Adirondacks, exist. Besides the river-flats that were kept perennially fertile by nearly annual overflows and a top dressing of rich silt, the old maize-lands of the Mohawk were vast in extent, and all

ready for the plough. The region west of Albany was then spoken of by the colonists as "the Mohawk country," from the chief tribe of the Iroquois who inhabited it. Let us glance at the human environment of the new settler.

Besides a few small houses of white men, standing singly along the river, there were villages and fortified large towns of the Mohawks, called, in the common English term of the period, "castles." The scattered lodges of the Indians were found near most of the settlements, such as Schenectady, Caughnawaga, Stone Arabia, or Fort Plain, and often their cabins were found inside the white men's fortifications, as in Fort Hunter; but in the palisaded Indian towns, hundreds and even thousands were gathered together. All the white settlements along the Mohawk or Hudson were near the river, the uplands or clearings beyond the flats not being considered of much value. On the Hudson, besides Albany, were Half Moon and Saratoga, which latter stood, not over the wonderful ravine from which gushes the healing water of the mineral springs, but several miles to the eastward. Along the Mohawk were Schenectady, Crane's Village, Fort Hunter, Warrensburg, a hamlet, Caughnawaga (or Fonda), Canajoharie, Palatine, German Flats, and Burnet's Field, now called Herkimer. Over in Cherry Valley were, later on, Scottish settlers, and in Schóharie more Germans.

Besides Jellis Fonda at Caughnawaga (now Fonda), who was a great Indian trader, and afterward major of militia, Johnson's most congenial neighbour was a

fellow Irishman, John Butler. He had come out from the old country as a lieutenant of infantry in the ill-fated expedition for the reduction of Canada in 1711; when, through stormy weather and the ignorance of the pilots, the greater part of the fleet under Sir Hovenden Walker was destroyed in the St. Lawrence, and over a thousand men drowned. As one of the purchasers, with Governor Cosby and others, of a tract of sixty thousand acres of land, seven miles from the site, later called Johnstown, in which stood Johnson Hall, Lieutenant Butler cultivated and improved his portion. To each of his two sons, Walter and John, he gave a large farm, and both he and his sons were very influential among the Indians. The father served as lieutenant, holding the same rank for seventy years; and the two sons were afterward captains in the Indian corps, under Johnson, in the Lake George campaign. To this family the new settler, Johnson, became warmly attached; and the friendship remained unbroken until the coming of death, which the Arabs call the Severer of Friendships.

This line of settlements formed the frontier or line of outposts of civilization. On every side their frontagers were the Iroquois, or Indians of Five Nations, while right among them were the Mohawks. Only one English outpost faced Lake Ontario. This was the trading-station of Oswego. Here in 1722, the daring governor, William Burnet, aiming at the monopoly of the fur-trade, in defiance of the French, and in the face of the Seneca Indians' protest, unfurled the British flag for the first time in the region

of the Great Lakes. He built the timber lodge at his own expense, and encouraged bold young men, mostly from Albany and the valley settlements, to penetrate to Niagara and beyond. These commercial travellers — prototypes of the smart, well-dressed, and brainy drummers of to-day, and in no whit their inferiors in courage, address, and fertility of resource — went among the western Indians. They learned their language, and so opened the new routes of trade that within a twelvemonth from the unfurling of the British flag at Oswego there were seen at Albany the far-off lake tribes and even the Sioux of Dakota. Trade received such a tremendous stimulus that in 1727 Governor Burnet erected a regular fort at Oswego, where, in 1757, a French traveller found sixty or seventy cabins in which fur-traders lived. A promising settlement, begun by the Palatine Germans at Herkimer, was called Burnet's Field, or, on the later powder-horn maps, Fort Harkiman.

The fur-trade in our day calls for the slaughter annually of two hundred million land quadrupeds; drives men to ravage land and ocean, and even to rob the water animals of their skins; sends forty million peltries annually to London alone, and is still one of the great commercial activities of the world. It was relatively much greater in Johnson's day; and to gain a master's hand in it was already his ambition. It was the year 1738, the date of the birth of George III. of England, whom later he was to serve as his sovereign. Arriving in the nick of time, Johnson began at once the triple activities of settling his uncle's

acres with farmers, of opening a country store, and of clearing new land for himself. This latter was rapidly accomplished, Indian fashion, by girdling the trunks one year, thus quickly turning them into leafless timber, and planting either corn or potatoes the next season, in the now sunlighted and warm ground. Or the standing timber was cut down and by fire converted into potash, two tons to the acre, which was easily leached out, and was quickly salable in Europe.

Corn or maize was the crop which above all others enabled the makers of America to hold their own and live; and corn was the grain most plentifully raised in the Mohawk Valley, though wheat was an early and steady crop. Corn meal is still sold in England as "Oswego flour," — a name possibly invented by Johnson, who became a large exporter of grain and meal.

To be landlord's agent, pioneer settler, farmer, and storekeeper all in one, Johnson needed assistance in various ways and resolved to have it. He had from the first come to stay for life and grow up with the country. He was probably in America less than a year before he took as his companion, Catharine, the daughter of a German Palatine settler named Weissenburg, or Wisenberg.¹ Kate was the only wife John-

¹ Mr. E. F. De Lancey, the well-known writer on American history and genealogy, knew personally the grandchildren of Sir William Johnson, and has embodied valuable information about him and them in his notes to Jones's "History of New York during the Revolutionary War." In his letter to the writer, dated March 28, 1891, he kindly sent a transcript from a

son ever had, and the only woman with whom he lived in wedlock. She is described as a sweet-tempered maiden, robust in health, fairly dowered with mental abilities, and with a good influence over her husband. No record of the marriage ceremony has yet been found ; but the couple, if not joined in wedlock by some one of the Dutch or German clergymen of the Valley, as is most likely, had their wedding before the Rev. Thomas Barclay, an English Episcopal missionary. Mr. Barclay laboured at Fort Hunter, and in the little English church officiated for years, as well as at Albany and Schenectady ; but the records of Fort Hunter have not survived the accidents of time. When in 1862 the dust of this maker of America was disturbed, and his bones sealed up in granite for more honourable burial, a plain gold ring was found, inscribed on the inside, "June. 1739. 16." This date may have been that of his marriage with "Lady" Johnson, his own lawful wife, who probably needed no title to adorn the beautiful character which tradition bestows upon her. Johnson, when a baronet with laurelled brow, and a fame established on two continents ; the head of a family in which were

letter in Mrs. Bowes's own handwriting — "Information my father gave me when with him. Catharine Wisenberg, a native of Germany, married to Sir W. Johnson, Bar't in the U. States of America, died in 1759." Mrs. Bowes was a daughter of Sir John Johnson, who was a son of Sir William Johnson. It is probable that the spelling Wisenberg is only the phonetic form of Weissenburg. The local gossip and groundless traditions, like those set down by J. R. Simms, are in all probability worthless.

two baronetcies, father and son, — an honour unparalleled in American colonial history, — made a will, preserved in Albany, in which he desired the remains of his “beloved wife Catharine” interred beside him. Of Molly Brant, his later mistress, he spoke and wrote as his housekeeper; of the Palatine German lawfully wedded to him, as his beloved wife.

Doubtless, also, for the first years of married life, through her exemption from family cares, though these weighed lightly in early colonial days, in the absence of the artificial life of the cities, she was enabled to attend to the store, while her husband worked in the field, rode with grist to the mill, or traded with the Indians in their villages. Their first child, John, was not born until they had crossed the Mohawk River, and occupied Mount Johnson, in 1742.

We can easily sum up the inventory of a country store on the frontier over one hundred and fifty years ago, whose chief customers were farmers, trappers, *bos-lopers* or wood-runners, hunters, and Indians. On the shelves would be arranged the thick, warm, woollen cloth called “duffel,” which made “as warm a coat as man can sell,” and the coarse shoddy-like stuff named “strouds;” in the bins, powder, shot, bullets, lead, gun-flints, steel traps, powder-horns, rum, brandy, beads, mirrors, and trinkets for the Indians, fish hooks and lines, rackets or snow-shoes, groceries, hardware, some of the commonest drugs, and building articles.

In trading, a coin was rare. The money used was seawant, or wampum, but most of the business done

was by barter ; peltries, corn, venison, ginseng, roots, herbs, brooms, etc., being the red man's stock in trade. The white settlers paid for their groceries and necessities of civilization in seawant, or wampum, potash, and cereals. One of the earliest in the collection of Johnson's papers at Albany is a letter to "Dear Billy" from Captain Warren at Boston, suggesting a shipment in the spring, from the farm at Warrensburg, of grain and other produce to Boston by way of Albany.

Being of robust health, with a strong frame and commanding figure, jovial in disposition and easy in manners, Johnson was not only able to show habitual industry, but in the field-sports and athletic games to take part and make himself popular alike with the muscular young Dutch and Germans and with the more lithe red men. The famous castle or palisaded village of the Mohawks on the hill-slopes back of Auriesville, now visible to all passengers by railway, and marked by the shrine of Our Lady of Martyrs, was but a short distance to the westward. Here Johnson soon became known as a friend as well as an honest trader. His simple and masterly plan was, never to lie, cheat, or deceive, and never to grant what he had once refused. To the red men much of a white man's thinking was a mystery ; but truth was always simple, and as heartily appreciated as it was easily understood.

As early as May 10, 1739, we find this man of restless activity planning to locate a branch trading-house on the Susquehanna, two hundred miles to the

south. Already he had seen the advantages and prospect of speedy wealth in the fur-trade, a privilege won years before by his Schenectady neighbours. He now entered diligently into it, employing a number of runners or bos-lopers, who scoured the woods and valleys populated with Indians, in his interest, diverting the trade from Albany to his own post. This was the beginning of jealous quarrels between him and the Albanians. That his eye was keenly open to every new advantage or possibility of progress, was seen in his buying as early as 1739, after one year's residence in the valley, a lot of land across the Mohawk, on which ran a stream of water, the Chucktununda Creek, with abundance of potential mill-power. To ride horseback with bags fifteen miles to Caughnawaga every time meal was needed, was too much loss of time and energy. The German women had long carried bags of wheat and maize from Schoharie to Schenectady, traversing the distance on foot, bearing corn in coming and grist in returning, on their backs. There was a mill at Caughnawaga, and one owned by the Dutch Church at Schenectady, both sufficiently distant. Johnson saw at once in a mill ease and revenue. The Indian name of the stream, Chucktununda, is said to mean "stone roofs or houses," and was applied to other water-courses with banks of overhanging rocks which formed shelter during rain. This coveted spot became later the famous "Mount" Johnson, on which the stone fortress-mansion still stands, at Akin, three miles west of Amsterdam and visible to all railway travel-

lers as they fly between the great Lake City and New York.

The appearance of the Mohawk Valley, though still unchanged in its great cosmic features of sky, mountain, and main watercourses, was vastly different a century and a half ago. On its surface were many minor features quite different from those which to-day greet the eye of traveller, denizen, or palace-car inmate. Then the primeval forest, rich in game, covered hill and dale, except along the river-flats, where were great expanses of meadow in the wide level of the valley. Here were maize-fields surrounding the Indian villages for miles.

Owing, however, to the largeness of forest area, the streams were of greater proportions and much more numerous than at present. Fish were vastly abundant, and so tame as to be easily caught, even with the hand of Indian or white skilled in wood and water craft. Animal life was rich and varied to a degree not now easily imaginable or even credible, did not the records of geology, of contemporary chronicles, and the voices of tradition all agree on this point. Then the "wild cow" or bison, though rapidly diminishing, owing to the introduction of fire-arms, was still a source of fur and food. Besides the elk, deer were plentiful on the hills, often seen drinking at night and early in the morning at the river's brink, and occasionally were killed inside of the new settlements. A splendid specimen of elk horns from a buck shot by Johnson on his own grounds, was presented by him to Chief Justice Thomas Jones, who

wrote a loyalist history of New York during the Revolutionary War, and long adorned the hall of Fort Neck mansion on Long Island. Smaller fur-bearing animals were beyond the power of arithmetic. Wolves were uncomfortably numerous, active, and noisy. To their ceaseless nocturnal music there were slight pauses of silence, except when some gory battle-field or scalping-party's raid or unusual spoil of hunters became the storm-centre, and gathered them together from a radius of many miles. Most notable of all the animals, in physical geography, in commerce, and for clothing, was the beaver. This amphibious creature of architectural instincts was the great modifier of the earth's surface, damming up tens of thousands of the hill streams which fed the great rivers, and thus causing a vast surface of the land, otherwise dry, to be covered with water, while it greatly changed the appearance of the landscape. There are to-day thousands of grassy and mossy dells which even the inexperienced eye sees were once the homes of the beavers, while thousands of others have long since, under the open sun, become fertile meadows. The beaver, by yielding the most valuable of the furs, furnished also the standard of value in trade. The beaver as seen on the seal of the city of York, like the prehistoric *pecus*, or cattle, which made *pecuniary* value, or the salt of the ancient *salary* or rice in old Japan, was quoted oftener than coin.

The Indian trails of New York were first obliterated by wagon-roads or metaled turnpikes, and then covered by iron rails and wooden ties. The flanged iron

wheels have taken the place of the moccasin, as locomotor and freight-carrier ; but in Johnson's time the valleys, passes, and portages or "carries" were all definitely marked, and generally easily visible, on account of the long tramping of inturned feet. There are places to-day on the flinty rock polished by long attrition of deer-leather soles ; and wherever the natural features of the landscape point to the probable saving of linear space, there skilled search usually reveals the old trail. One of the first proofs of the genius of Johnson and the entrance in his mind of continental ideas was his thorough study of the natural highways, trails, and watercourses of the Iroquois empire, and the times and methods of their punctual migrations. He soon found that while late autumn, winter, and spring was their season for trapping and shooting their game, June, July, and August formed the period when the peltries were brought in for sale. In early autumn they went fishing, or their travelling-parties were on peaceful errands, such as attending those council-fires which filled all the atmosphere with blue haze. As a rule, the Indians avoided the mountains, and dwelt in the valleys and well-watered regions, where fish and game for food, osiers and wood fibres for their baskets, clay for their rude pottery abounded, and where pebbles of every degree of hardness were at hand, to be split, clipped, drilled, grooved, or polished for their implements of war, ceremony, and religion. In savage life, vast areas of the earth's surface are necessary for his hunting and nomad habits. Agriculture and civilization,

which mean the tilling and dressing of the earth, enable a tribe to make a few acres of fertile soil suffice, where one lone hunter could scarcely exist. The constant trenching upon the land of the wild hunter and fisherman, by the farmer and manufacturer, who utilize the forces of Nature, and the resistance of the savage to this process, make the story of the "Indian question."

Apart from the pretext of religion, equally common to all, the main object of French, Dutch, and English traders was fur, as that of the New England coast men was fish. The tremendous demand of Europe and China kept the prices of peltries high, and it was in this line of commercial effort that fortunes were most quickly made, most of the early profits being reckoned at twenty times the amount of outlay. Until 1630 a strict monopoly of two trading-companies shut out all interlopers from the Indian country.

In 1639, at the foundation of Rensselaerwyck, trade was nominally thrown open to all. What was formerly done covertly by interlopers and servants of the company, became the privileges of every burgher. Though still rigidly denied to outsiders, traders' shops soon sprung up along the muddy streets of the colony, and an immense business was done over the greasy counters. The gallon kegs of brandy, called ankers; a puncheon of beer; a pile of shaggy woollen stuffs, then called duffles, and now represented most nearly by Ulster or overcoat cloth; a still coarser fabric called strouds, for breech clouts and squaws' clothes, with axes and beads, formed the staple of the cheaper

order of shopkeepers. In the better class of dealers in "Indian haberdashery," and in peltries, potash, and ginseng, the storehouses would have an immense array of all sorts of clothes, hats and shoes, guns, knives, axes, powder, lead, glass beads, bar and hoop iron for arrow-heads, and files to make them, red lead, molasses, sugar, oil, pottery, pans, kettles, hollow ware, pipes, and knick-knacks of all sorts. It was not long before the desire to forestall the markets entered the hearts of the Dutch as well as the French; and soon, matching the *courier du bois*, or hardy rangers of the Canadian forests, emerged the corresponding figure of the bos-lopers, or commercial drummers. This prototype of the present natty and wide-awake metropolitan, in finest clothes, hat, and gloves, with most engaging manners and invincible tongue, was a hardy athlete in his prime, able to move swiftly and to be ever alert. He was well versed in the human nature of his customers. Skilled in woodcraft, he knew the trails, the position of the Indian villages, the state of the tides, currents, the news of war and peace, could read the weather signs, the probabilities of the hair and skin crops, the fluctuations of the market, and was usually ready to advance himself by fair advantage, or otherwise, over his white employer or Indian producer. Rarely was he an outlaw, though usually impatient of restraint, and when in the towns, apt to patronize too liberally the liquor-seller.

In this way the market was forestalled, and the choicest skins secured by the Albany men, who knew how to select and employ the best drummers. So

fascinating and profitable was this life in the woods, that agriculture was at first neglected, and breadstuffs were imported. The evil of the abandonment of industry, however, never reached the proportions notorious in Canada, where it sometimes happened that ten per cent of the whole population would disappear in the woods, and the crops be neglected. When, too, Schenectady, Esopus, and the Palatine settlements in the Mohawk Valley were fully established, the farmers multiplied, the acreage increased, and grain was no longer imported. It was, from the first, the hope and desire of the Schenectady settlers to break the Albany monopoly, and obtain a share of the lucrative trade. This was bitterly opposed for half a century, and many were the inquisitorial visits of the Albany sheriffs to Schenectady and the Valley settlements, to seize contraband goods; but usually, on account of the steady resistance of both magistrates and citizens, they who came for wool went home shorn. The foolish Governor Andros went so far as to lay upon the little village an embargo, — one of the silly precedents of the “Boston Port Bill,” — by a most extraordinary proclamation forbidding any wagons and carts to ply between the city of Albany and the Dorp of Schenectady, except upon extraordinary occasions; and only with the consent of the Albany magistrates could passengers or goods be carried to the defiant little Dutch town. All such official nonsense ultimately proved vain, and its silliness became patent even to the Albany monopolists; and Schenectady won the victory of free trade with the Indians.

This point of time was shortly after the coming of Johnson, who thus arrived at a lucky moment ; and at once entering to reap where others had sown, he became a man of the new era. He found the situation free for his enterprise, which soon became apparently boundless. He cultivated the friendship not only of the Indians, but of the white wood-runners, trappers, and frontiersmen generally ; and by his easy manners, generosity, and strict integrity, bound both the red and the white men to himself. He was a " hail-fellow-well-met " to this intelligent class of men, and all through his wonderful career found in them a tremendous and unfailing resource of power. Johnson laid the foundations of permanent success, deep and broad, by the simple virtues of truth and honesty. He disdained the meanness of the petty trader. His word was kept, whether promise or threat. He refused to gain a temporary advantage by a sacrifice of principle, and soon the poorest and humblest learned to trust him. His word, even as a young man, soon became bond and law. The Indians, who were never able to fathom diplomacy, could understand simple truth. Two of the most significant gestures in the sign language of the Indians are, when the index finger is laid upon the mouth and moved straight forward, as the symbol of verity ; and the same initial gesture expresses with sinuosities, as of a writhing serpent, symbolical of double dealing, prevarication or falsehood. The tongue of the truth-speaker was thus shown to be as straight as an arrow, while that of the liar was like a worm, or the crooked slime-line

of a serpent. In this simple, effective way Johnson's business enlarged like his land domains from year to year, while on knowledge of the Indians and their language, and of the physical features of the Mohawks' empire, he soon became an authority. As early as 1743 he succeeded in opening a direct avenue of trade with Oswego, doing a good business not only in furs, but in supplying with provisions and other necessaries both the white trappers and petty traders who made rendezvous at the fort. He was now well known in Albany and New York, and soon opened correspondence with the wealthy house of Sir William Baker & Co., of London, as well as with firms in Atlantic seaports and the West Indies.

He prepared for a wider sphere of influence by improving his land north of the Mohawk River. He began the erection on it of a strong and roomy stone house, — one of the very few edifices made of cut stone then in the State, and probably the only one west of the Hudson River. This house is still standing, and kept in excellent repair by its owner and occupant, Mr. Ethan Akin. It is two and a half stories high; its dimensions are 64 by 34 feet; the walls, from foundation to garret, are two feet thick. There is not to-day a flaw in them, nor has there ever been a crack. The roof, now of slate and previously of shingles, was at first of lead, which was used for bullets during the Revolutionary War. Part of the house seems to have been sufficiently finished for occupancy by the summer of 1742, for here, on the 5th of November, his son John was born. Around the house he planted a circle of

locust-trees, two or three of which still remain. His grist-mill stood on Chucktununda Creek, which flowed through his grounds; and near it was the miller's house. This branch of his business — flour manufacture — was so soon developed that coo- perage was stimulated, and shipments of Johnson's Mohawk Valley flour were made to the West Indies and to Nova Scotia. Grand as his stone dwelling was, a very pa- troon's mansion, — and it is probable that one of Johnson's purposes in rearing what was then so splen- did a mansion was to impress favourably the Indians, — he became none the less, but even more, their familiar and friend. He joined in their sports, at- tended their councils, entertained the chiefs at his board, feasted the warriors and people in his fields, and on occasions put on Indian costume. In sum- mer this would mean plenty of dress and liberal painting, but in winter, abundance of buckskin, a war- bonnet of vast proportions, and a duffel blanket. Yet all this was done as a private individual and a mer- chant, having an eye to the main chance. He as yet occupied no official position. His domestic life in these early days at the Mohawk Valley must have been very happy; and here were born, evidently in quick succession and probably before the year 1745, by which time the stone house was finished, his two daughters, Mary and Nancy. About sixty yards north of the mansion was a hill on which a guard-house stood, with a look-out ever on the watch. On ac- count of this hill the place was often spoken of as "Mount" Johnson. In time of danger a garrison

of twenty or thirty men occupied this point of wide view.

Despite his many cares, Johnson enjoyed reading and the study of science. He ordered books and periodical literature regularly from London. His scientific taste was especially strong in astronomy. To the glorious canopy of stars, which on winter nights make the mountain-walled valley a roofed palace of celestial wonders, Johnson's eyes were directed whenever fair weather made their splendours visible. In autumn the brilliant tints of the sumach, dogwood, swamp-maple, sassafras, red and white oak, and the various trees of the order of *Sapindaceæ* filled the hills and lowlands with a glory never seen in Europe. His botanical tastes could be enjoyably cultivated, for in orchids, ferns, flowering plants, and wonders of the vegetable world, few parts of North America are richer than the Mohawk Valley.