SIR WILLIAM JOHNSON

CHAPTER I

HIS EARLY LIFE IN IRELAND AND ON THE MOHAWK

1715–1748

THE year 1715 was epochal. It witnessed the end of one great chapter in the history of civilization and the beginning of a new one yet greater. The chapter that ended then was the one which embraced the stubborn and bloody dynastic wars that since 1672 had resulted from the collision between the stern, sullen genius of William of Orange and the reckless, unscrupulous ambition of Louis XIV. For forty-two years war had raged everywhere, broken only in its devastation by such brief and hollow truces as Nimwegen and Ryswick. True, William died in 1702, killed by the stumbling of his clumsy charger just at the threshold of a new campaign. But during the thirteen years of his reign as King of England he had built up a party of aggressive patriotism, which has since proved the

founder of the British Empire as we know it to-day.

For twelve years after William died, this party under the reign of a really great though rather indolent woman, Queen Anne, carried forward William's projects and executed his policies with no less vigor and, possibly, with even more success, than he himself could have done alive. I have seen the conflicts of William and Louis described in some histories as "religious wars." They were anything but that. They were dynastic and political wars. William may be called the inventor of the "balance of power." He was the originator of coalitions. The England that he took from the Stuarts in 1689 was an insular province near the coast of Europe. The England that he left to Queen Anne and John Churchill in 1702 was the prime factor in Europe, and the last vision that faded before his dying eyes was the dawn of the British Empire.

It is a strange fact that, with all her wealth of literature, England has no thorough history of her greatest modern king! A few great soldiers have been born to the purple since the dark ages—Gustav Adolf, Charles XII, Peter of Russia, and Frederic of Prussia. But no man of royal birth has ever combined the sol-

dier and the statesman as William did. It may, perhaps, be fortunate for England that the task of carrying William's statecraft into complete execution passed by legacy, as it were, from his hands into those of Marlborough; for the Great Duke was a greater man than even the Great King. And in all human probability the commander who won Blenheim and Malplaquet was a safer instrument of destiny than the king who lost Steenkerke and Neerwinden.

The year 1715 witnessed the end of Louis XIV's long and turbulent reign and the accession of Louis XV to the Bourbon throne under the regency of the able and dissolute but peaceful Duke of Orleans. It also marked the permanent solution of dynastic chaos in England by the installation of the sturdy, and, in the long run, conservative, House of Hanover.

But more important than any or all of these events, so far as the destinies of the Western Hemisphere were concerned, was the fact that in 1715 began a period of peace that lasted a generation, during which the Anglo-Saxon colonies along the Atlantic slope found opportunity for that development of resource and unity which, forty-five years later, enabled them to expel Latin power from

North America, and, sixty years after, to create our Republic.

It seems fittingly coincident that this epochal year of 1715 should have been the birth-date of a boy destined to play a colossal part in the new era then at its dawn. He was the son of Christopher Johnson and his wife, Anne Warren, and he first saw light at Warrenpoint, County Down, Ireland. I have seen in a so-called Life of Sir William Johnson, printed in Canada about sixty years ago, the statement that his father was "an obscure Irish schoolmaster, and a cripple!" It is possible that in his younger days Christopher Johnson may have taught school. But from 1692 till 1708 he was an officer in a regiment of heavy cavalry, then known as Cadogan's Horse—a regiment that has maintained continuous organization more than two hundred years, and is now the Fifth Regiment of Dragoon Guards in the British Army.

In 1715, when his son William was born, Mr. Johnson held the post of local magistrate for the bailiwick of Carlingford, to which he was appointed in 1709 as a reward for long and faithful service under King William and Marlborough. He was, indeed, "a cripple" at that time, as the Canadian biographer says. But his physical disability—a

bent and withered leg—was honorable, because it was due to a French bullet that hit him in the famous charge of Lord Cadogan's Cavalry Brigade at Oudenarde—a charge that needed only a Tennyson to make it immortal. Whether he was "obscure" or not is hardly worth discussion. At any rate, he held a social rank that enabled him to marry Anne Warren, daughter of a commodore and sister of an admiral in the British navy.

If there is anything congenital in the martial spirit, it may be that the wonderful military talents subsequently developed by William Johnson were transmitted to him from the loins of the veteran of the wars in Flanders, who could count his battles from Namur to Oudenarde. So when his young wife—"Mistress Nancy" as the society dialect of those days had it—presented a bouncing boy to the veteran of Flanders, the father named him after the old fighting king who had been his commander at Namur. Of William's childhood and youth there is scanty record. In May, 1726, his uncle, Admiral Warren, makes the following entry in his diary, or, as he called it, his "log ashore":

> . . . Visiting me Mistress Nancy Johnson, with her Young Son, William, aged eleven. William is a Spritely Boy, well grown, of good parts, Keen

Wit but Most Onruly and Streperous! I see in him the Makings of a Strong Man. Shall keep my Wether Eye on this lad!

The importance of the old sea-dog's "wether eye" as a factor in his nephew's fortunes will appear later on.

When William was fourteen the usual family consultation was held to determine what should be done with him. The consensus of domestic opinion was that he should be what they called in those days "the King's Own." That meant either the army or the navy. But, to the amazement of every one, the youngster declared that he had made up his mind to study law and be a barrister. After some vain argument, the family acquiesced in the boy's choice, and he was sent to the ancient Academy of Newry, where he soon immersed himself in Latin conjugations and the Anabasis. It is not recorded that he was particularly apt. He grew rapidly, but his development of body seems to have outrun that of mind. At any rate, the "onruly and streperous" quality mentioned by his sailor uncle, at an earlier period, appears to have abided with him; because in his seventeenth year, or about the middle of his third year at the Academy, his curriculum ended suddenly in a peremptory expulsion.

The immediate cause of this was an attempt on the part of the Moderator to chastise him, which resulted in failure, disastrous to the pedagogue and dismal to young William. He was not only expelled from the school, but taken before a magistrate on a charge of aggravated assault and battery, fined seven guineas, and "put on the limits" for twenty-one days!

At the end of his period of detention young William returned to the paternal abode at Warrenpoint, only to encounter fresh trouble. Sixteen years' service with "the Army in Flanders" had made a martinet of 'Squire Christopher, and twenty-four years of local magistracy had imbued him with Spartan theories as to the majesty of law. Therefore, though his tall son William was unquestionably by long odds the physical superior of the old and crippled parent, the latter did not hesitate to subject him, upon his return home, to the kind of discipline in which the robust pedagogue had so signally failed.

This flagellation William endured with filial grace, doubtless on the principle that it did not hurt him much, and did the old gentleman a great deal of good.

The next three or four years of his life

were uneventful. He served for some time as magistrate's clerk in his father's office. But all the time he diligently read law and history. So apt a law-student was he and so able a preceptor did he find in a local barrister of the name of Byrne, his father's cousin, that he was listed for examination at the spring assizes in 1737 for admission as a junior barrister. But a month or two before the assizes met, an opportunity was offered to him which permanently turned the current of his life.

Some years prior to that time his uncle, Admiral Sir Peter Warren, had purchased, under royal grant, a large tract of land in the colony of New York, "scituate in the Valley of Mohock, west of the trading-post called Schenectady, and south of the river called Mohock." The settlements of the Palatine Germans and Holland Dutch were pushing up the valley of the Mohawk rapidly, under the benign influence of the long peace, so that by 1737 Sir Peter's land had acquired market value and was worth looking after. He therefore offered to his young nephew, then barely twenty-two years old, the chief stewardship of this estate, with the general agency of all his interests in America, and a power of attorney "to buy and sell or lease

real estate, to incur debts or pay demands, and in all respects to do all things in the name of Peter Warren, the same and with equal validity and binding force as if the said Peter Warren had done them with his own hand and under his own seal." That Admiral Warren had faith in the judgment and integrity of his erstwhile "most onruly and streperous" nephew may be inferred from the fact that this sweeping power of attorney was made to last "during the lifetime of the said William Johnson."

Joyfully accepting the great opportunity —which may, perhaps, be described as due to the keen vision of that "wether eye" the old sea-warrior had long ago determined to "keep on this lad"—young Johnson sailed late in the summer of 1737 from Dundalk to Bristol, and thence to New York, where he arrived in December of that year. His papers indicate that he spent the winter of 1737–38 in New York city, making plans and laying in supplies for active operations in his new field of duty early in the spring.[1]

[1] During the winter of 1737–38 that young Johnson spent in New York city he was the guest of his aunt, Sir Peter Warren's wife. Lady Warren was Susan DeLancey, daughter of Stephen DeLancey, one of the richest merchants in New York, and the family held leadership in the most refined and aristocratic society of the colonial metropolis. In this select social

As soon as navigation was opened in the North River, in the spring of 1738, Johnson proceeded to Albany with a sloop-load of implements for subduing the forest, including a "set of mill-irons" and a "run of stone." He also took with him about half a dozen mechanics of various trades. From Albany the material for the new settlement was transported by land to a point on the south side of the Mohawk River, a short distance west of the mouth of Schoharie Creek, where he founded a settlement on his uncle's land. This settlement was then known as "Warrensbush" by the Dutch and "Warrensburg" by the English-speaking settlers, but it has long since disappeared from the map. Here young Johnson remained about five years, diligently improving his uncle's property by building mills, making roads, and clearing land; also by selling land in farm tracts and encouraging and aiding the settlers to clear it.

The young agent for Admiral Warren's estate in the forest soon found that its exact location was ill-defined and its boundaries

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circle William bore himself with tact, dignity, and grace worthy of wider experience and maturer years, and in it he met many men whose interest and influence were vastly useful to him later on.

quite conjectural. However, this was usually true of kingly grants in the American wilderness during those days, and the problem was not considered formidable. At any rate, the particular point first occupied was not in dispute, and William Johnson began his task of subduing the forest with the tremendous energy and keen judgment that made him the colossal pioneer he proved to be.

Thus far I have referred to Warren as an admiral and a baronet. As a matter of fact, at the moment when William Johnson began operations in the Mohawk Valley his uncle, who owned the grant, was only senior captain or commodore of the British squadron on the North American station, his flagship being the 28-gun frigate Squirrel. He was, however, promoted to the rank of rear-admiral in 1739, vice-admiral in 1745, and was made a baronet. It may be worth while to remark here that Stone, in his generally accurate and admirable Life of Sir William Johnson, says that Admiral Sir Peter Warren was born in 1704. This may have been a typographical error. At any rate, the navy records of England show that Warren was rated a midshipman in 1706, commissioned a lieutenant in 1712, post-captain in 1724, and

was commodore on the North American station in 1737–38. In those days midshipmen were usually rated in the British navy at from twelve to fourteen years of age. While we have not been able to find the exact date of Admiral Warren's birth, it may be presumed that he was at least twelve years old in 1706 or ten in 1704. Instead of the latter date, Stone should, doubtless, have said 1694.

Young Johnson proceeded diligently to improve and develop his uncle's estate. Much of it was sold off in farms of from 150 to 300 acres, and settlement was rapid. Sir Peter had hoped to preserve the estate intact and rent its lands in long leases to tenants. But William soon advised him that the Dutch and Scotch-Irish settlers were averse to rentals and would take the land only in fee simple upon easy terms of payment. So, rather than let his grant remain an unproductive wilderness, Sir Peter reluctantly consented to sell his land, and in a few years the most of it had passed out of his hands, leaving him the possessor of a snug sum of money and a large fund of mortgages drawing a fair rate of interest. Sir Peter died in 1752, and then William Johnson acquired possession of such of his lands as remained unsold—probably about one-third of the original area.

His Early Life in Ireland

From this time on, for the sake of convenience, I shall refer to Johnson as "Sir William," although he was not actually made a baronet until some years later.

Sir William passed five years at Warrensbush—1738–43. But he never intended to make it his permanent home, nor was he content with the occupation of agent for a landlord. He had not been at Warrensbush two years before he acquired by purchase a tract of several thousand acres, on part of which a portion of the city of Amsterdam now stands. This tract lay north of the Mohawk River, and Johnson acquired title to it in 1741. He at once began building a substantial stone house, known as "Fort Johnson" or "Mount Johnson," which is still standing, about a mile west of the corporate limits of Amsterdam. He also built a sawmill and grist-mill on a water-power running through his lands. Sir Peter Warren heard of these operations and, being apprehensive that Sir William intended to give up the charge of his estate and set up in business for himself, wrote two or three rather severe letters to his nephew. The latter, however, assured his uncle that, whatever he might do on his own account, it would not in the least degree interfere with his care for the inter-

ests of the Warren estate, and ultimately pacified the admiral on that point.

Sir William's five years at Warrensbush were not eventful in any broad sense. But he made it a preparatory school for the great destiny that awaited him. Apart from the care of his uncle's estate and, after 1741, the development of his own on the north side of the river, he found time to learn, to a degree never surpassed and seldom if ever equaled by any white man, the character, ways, manners, modes of thinking, and the language of the Iroquois Indians.

He soon discovered that the management of Indian affairs, then conducted by a Board of Colonial Commissioners, was rotten to the core. There was no system whatever in the regulation of traffic between the whites and Indians. Any adventurer able to pay the small license fee required, or enjoying the favor of a commissioner, could obtain a permit without any inquiry whatever as to his antecedents, character, or responsibility. The result was that the Indian trade had fallen, almost without exception, into the hands of sordid, unprincipled sharpers, who never thought of an honest deal with any red man, but cheated and swindled the Indians at every turn.

About this time—1741—George Clinton, the father of General Sir Henry Clinton of the British Army, was appointed Colonial Governor of New York, though he did not actually take up the duties of the office until 1743. However, Sir William immediately began a correspondence with him, which became voluminous, so that by the time Governor Clinton assumed control, he had the benefit of Sir William's keen insight and thorough personal observation to guide him in the administration of Indian affairs, which had then become the most important element of executive responsibility in the colony of New York.

George Clinton was a veteran naval officer and at the time of his appointment to be Colonial Governor of New York held the rank of vice-admiral. His only previous experience in a civil capacity had been that of Governor of Newfoundland for eight or nine years; but that was a mere sinecure, as there were not more than a thousand white people in Newfoundland at that time, while the few hundred Micmac Indians living there took care of themselves and needed little or no attention. Hence, he was not in any wise prepared for the turmoil of faction and the subtlety of political intrigue that distracted the councils

of New York. Still, he held his post for ten years—1743–53—and whatever may have been his other administrative shortcomings, the management of the Indian Department during his term of office left nothing to be desired—simply because, as soon as he had authority to do so, he lodged the whole power and responsibility of that office in the hands of Sir William Johnson. Admiral Clinton and Admiral Warren were warm friends and had been shipmates. No doubt a good word or two at the proper moment from Warren had done much to anchor Sir William in Clinton's confidence.

The most important event in Sir William's five years' residence at Warrensbush had been his marriage with Miss Katharine Weisenburg in 1739. This young woman was the daughter of Jacob Weisenburg, a Lutheran clergyman, who had given her the rudiments of a fair education. But the family became impoverished, and Katharine was "bound out" as a servant when about fourteen years old to a Mr. Phillips, who lived near Warrensbush. Soon after he settled at the latter place, William Johnson saw this girl, fancied her, and "bought her indentures" from Mr. Phillips. This was in 1739, and as soon as she became "his property" by pur-

chase of her indentures, he married her; the ceremony, according to W. Max Reid, author of The Mohawk Valley, being performed by the Rev. Mr. Barclay, rector of Queen Anne's Chapel at Fort Hunter. She bore to Sir William three children: Anne, born 1740; John (afterward Sir John), born 1742; and Mary, born 1744.[1]

At length, in the early spring of 1743, the new stone mansion at Mount Johnson was completed, and Sir William transferred his family and household to it from the log house which had been his habitation at Warrensbush. Some idea of the tremendous energy of the man may be formed from the fact that during the two years of his possession of the Mount Johnson tract he had not only built on it a commodious and, for those times, elegant stone mansion, but had built a large dam, forming a valuable water-power, a sawmill capable of turning out 1,000 to 1,500 feet of lumber a day, and had laid the foundations of a flouring-mill, which was completed and in operation the following year (1744). But more than all that, he had, by means of hired

[1] Some idea of the vicissitudes possible on that Old New York Frontier may be formed from the fact that a woman, destined to be the wife of one baronet of England and the mother of another, was a "bound servant" at fourteen, and that her husband had to buy her before he could marry her.

labor in a colony where it was difficult to induce men to work for wages, cleared and made ready for cultivation nearly 500 acres of the most fertile land to be found anywhere in the great "Mohawk Flats."

Much of this force of laborers he had brought over himself from the County Down, where his father acted as his employment-agent. During the year 1741 about sixty families came over—sturdy Scotch-Irish like himself. He paid all their expenses and had comfortable log houses prepared for their reception when they arrived. In accordance with the custom of those days, these immigrants came as "bound servants," but upon arrival they were immediately released from their indentures by Sir William, and lands belonging to his estate were allotted to them by long leases for nominal rental, which they paid in labor, or, as the saying was, "worked out."

This policy Sir William followed for many years, until he had gathered about him a numerous clan of frontier yeomanry as loyal to him as were ever the retainers of a feudal baron. On one occasion, hearing that a considerable number of German refugees had sailed from a port in Holland bound for New York, he arranged with his brother, Warren

Johnson, an officer in the British navy, then on shore duty in New York as keeper of the king's magazines, to meet them upon their arrival and persuade them to come to the Mohawk Valley and settle upon his estate. Captain Johnson succeeded, and the entire little colony, numbering about 160 souls, settled upon the extension of Sir William's estate, commonly known as the Johnstown tract. Besides all these vast undertakings—vast, indeed, for their times and conditions—Sir William established, in 1744, a trading-post at Oquawgo or Oghwaga, an Indian village on the Susquehanna, at the foot of the mountain from which it derived its name. Its location was near the present site of the village of Windsor, Broome County, N. Y., and about five or six miles below it on the river was the principal village of the remnant of the Tuscaroras, who had been adopted into the Iroquois Confederacy.

Oquawgo, which lay more than one hundred miles south of Sir William's home, was then an Indian village of about one hundred lodges, many of which were quite commodious habitations built of logs or of poles covered and roofed with bark, having fireplaces with chimneys, and otherwise far beyond the average aboriginal abode in the

essentials of decency and comfort. The population of this village was made up of people from every tribe of the Iroquois, and at the time of which I now write (1744) it had acquired a status of its own, having existed more than two hundred years, and its denizens were currently designated as a sort of tribe or clan by themselves, distinctive enough to cause them to be spoken of in most histories of the time and place as the "Oquawgo" (or "Oghwaga") Indians.

The name has been spelled in a great variety of ways. The author has adopted the orthography of his great-grandfather, Simon Buell, who came from Dutchess County shortly after the Revolution and settled close to the then nearly deserted Indian village, a part of his farm being land that had been cleared and cultivated by the Indians long before. Joseph Brant, in his correspondence and papers, always spelled it "Oghwaga," and maybe he was a better authority on Iroquois orthography than Simon Buell. However, in any future reference to the place I shall use the form "Oquawgo."

The trading-post which Sir William founded there in 1744 was built on the bank of the river opposite the Indian village and just abreast of the lower end of an island

which, from the profusion of apple-trees growing on it, was known to the older settlers as Indian Orchard. When Sir William proposed to establish this post, which was within the jurisdiction of the Oneida tribe, the chief of the southern district of that clan, Antone, gave him about a square mile of land in connection with it. The trading-post was a log blockhouse about 36×24 feet on the ground, with a second story projecting 2 feet all round, or 40×28 feet. It was surrounded by a palisade of logs placed upright some 10 feet high, with an open space of about 60 feet all round between it and the building. The enclosure contained a small but never-failing spring, so that, if besieged, the garrison of the post would have no trouble on the score of water-supply. After the conquest of Canada the palisade was taken away, and the blockhouse itself was burned by Colonel William Butler's Rangers (Americans) in 1778.

The site for the post was selected and the blockhouse built by Ezra Buell, Sr.,[1] a surveyor from Dutchess County, who was in Sir

[1] This Ezra Buell had a nephew, also named Ezra, who figured during the Revolution as a lieutenant in Morgan's Riflemen until 1778, and after that until 1783 as a captain in the Third New York Continentals.

William's employ for many years; his last service of any note having been to assist Simon Metcalf in running and marking the Fort Stanwix treaty line in 1769. When the post was established, Sir William requested Ezra Buell to manage it until he could find a competent man to be permanent agent.[1] This search seems to have lasted three years, because it was not until 1747 that Buell was relieved by John Butler—afterward notorious in the Tory annals of the Mohawk Valley. In the meantime the post had developed a great and thriving trade, which it continued to enjoy until the outbreak of the Revolution.

Sir William, when he applied to the Colonial Governor for a license, said: "I wish to create this trading-post not any more for the profits it may bring to me than to show by actual example that trade with the Indians can be conducted honestly as well as any other commercial business!"

The sequel soon proved that the Indians know as well as anybody when they are fairly dealt with. Sir William's honest trading-post at Oquawgo within five years drove out of business the horde of rascals who, from

[1] During this period Ezra took unto himself a pretty Tuscarora girl, with whom he lived happily for many years. He died near Kingston, on the Hudson, in 1807, aged eighty-nine.

the beginning of Indian traffic, had been robbing the red men of the Susquehanna Valley right and left.

Necessarily considerable capital was required to carry on such a tremendous volume of business. This was supplied mainly by Admiral Warren and the rest by Stephen and James DeLancey, who had taken a warm fancy to the stalwart and indefatigable young Scotch-Irishman. The rates of interest were low, and were paid, in the main, by percentage on profits. But few years elapsed, however, before the growth of Sir William's own fortune enabled him to discharge the principal of the loans from his Uncle Warren and the DeLanceys, and thereafter he was abundantly able to "go it alone."

Admiral Warren's ability to "finance" his ambitious nephew may be inferred from a letter written to Sir William by his brother, Captain Warren Johnson, under date of "New York, September 13, 1747." The material part of it is as follows:

Last evening I arrived here from Louisburg with my ship, which is in need of repairs, and I am to go to England in the Scarborough frigate, there to get a new command. My rank now entitles me to a first-class frigate, in which I will have much better opportunities than in the 20-gun ship I have

commanded these two years past. I have had no chance of independent cruising, having been all the time either with the fleet as despatch-vessel or on convoy. The result is that, excepting what share may fall to me as prize from the taking of Louisbourg and the St. Domingo fleet, the words "prize-money" have an empty sound for me.

I would much like to go up to Mount Johnson and see you. But the Scarborough sails too soon to permit making the journey and returning in time, and, besides, the first thing Aunt Susan (Mrs. Admiral Warren) told me when I arrived at her house was that you are now out among the Western Iroquois counteracting the intrigues of the French Papists and arranging for a contingent of warriors for the grand movement[1] to be carried out next spring.

So nothing is left for me but to go to England without seeing you.

I make no doubt you have heard of our Uncle Warren's great successes in his two cruises; the first as second-in-command to Admiral Anson and the second with a squadron of which he was commander-in-chief, part of which fell in with the Santo Domingo fleet, home bound with full cargoes,

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[1] The "grand movement" referred to was the proposed reduction of Crown Point and invasion of Canada by way of Lake Champlain early the next spring. It will be noted that Captain Warren Johnson spoke of it in the vaguest possible terms. His letter might, he thought, by some mishap fall into the hands of the French.

and took sixty-two sail of them. He had taken several rich ships before. He must now be one of the richest men in England, and not one has done his country better service. He must be worth four hundred thousand pounds sterling. He is now Vice-Admiral of the White and member of Parliament for Westminster; and I have no doubt in a very short time he will be a peer of England.

With his removal from Warrensbush to Mount Johnson in the early spring of 1743 the active and effective public career of Sir William Johnson may be said to have begun. Prior to that time his connection with public affairs had been limited to correspondence with Governor Clinton on the Indian question, and with the Colonial Chief-Justice, James DeLancey, in regard to the confusion of land-titles in the Mohawk Valley, both of which were then prime objects of public attention.

His first notable appearance in public affairs was his appointment by Chief-Justice DeLancey as master or referee in a land litigation between George Klock and Peter Van Braam of Canajoharie, involving a considerable tract north of the Mohawk River, where, by the vagueness of their terms, two purchases of land from the Indians appeared to overlap each other. Upon this issue he

brought to bear his knowledge of the Iroquois tongue, and personally examined a number of Indian witnesses without an interpreter. In fact, after about 1740, he never used an interpreter in his dealings with the Indians, but often acted as such himself at conferences between the Governor and delegations of chiefs at Albany. His report in this case was prepared with such ability and precision as to elicit the outspoken admiration of Judge DeLancey, who approved it.

Late in the fall of 1743 the venerable Colonel Peter Schuyler resigned from the Board of Indian Commissioners, and Governor Clinton at once invited Sir William to fill the vacancy. The Board consisted of five members, one of whom must, by the law then prevailing, be a minister of the Gospel. At the time under consideration the clerical member of the Board was a clergyman of the Church of England whose pastorate was in New York city, who knew little or nothing about Indian affairs, and paid little or no attention to the duties of his office. He was willing to resign, and Sir William recommended that his resignation be accepted. In his place he advised the Governor to appoint the Rev. Jacob Weisenburg, a Lutheran minister of Schenectady, and the father of his

wife. Mr. Weisenburg had lived among the Indians ever since his arrival in this country, early in the eighteenth century, had converted many of them, was familiar with their traits, and was much beloved by them. This was done. Not long afterward another member of the Board resigned, and, to fill his place, Sir William recommended the Rev. Mr. Van Ness, a Dutch Reformed pastor of Albany, whom Governor Clinton at once appointed.

He now had a majority of three to two on the Board on any or all of the three prime questions involved in the Indian problem: First, he was sure that the ministers of the Gospel—one representing the Holland Dutch and the other the Palatines—would stand by him in the determined effort he intended making to break up the liquor traffic with the Indians. Second, he knew that the reverend gentlemen could not possibly have any connection with the rascally traders or their interests, and would sustain him in his efforts to compel honest dealing with the red men. And, third, he took it for granted that they would joyfully back him up in his scheme to organize Protestant missions and mission schools throughout the Iroquois Confederacy, which he considered the only effective means of counteracting the intrigues and influence

of the Canadian French Jesuits, who for many years had been proselyting among the Six Nations—particularly the two western tribes, the Cayugas and the Senecas.

His anticipations in these directions proved well founded. The laws against selling liquor to the Indians were rigidly, and in some cases drastically, enforced—to such an extent that, according to the manuscript journal of William Sammons, corroborated by the papers of the Rev. John Barclay, a missionary, there were at one time twenty-six culprits in the Albany jail serving various terms of imprisonment for violation of the Indian anti-liquor law. Also during the period between 1743 and 1746 a majority of the trading-licenses previously granted had been revoked and annulled by the Governor on recommendation of the Board, and in three or four of the most flagrant cases of fraud and swindling, prosecutions had been instituted by the Attorney-General or King's Counsel for the Colony. Besides these things, Sir William's pet policy of founding numerous missions and mission schools among the tribes was adopted and an appropriation was made by the Colonial Assembly to aid them.

In fact, it may be said that, supported as

he invariably was by his two clerical henchmen, Sir William soon became to all intents and purposes not only the president of the Board, but the Board itself. His idea of the value of Christianity as an agency of civilization among the Indians may be inferred from a passage in a letter he wrote to Governor Clinton in 1744, in which he said:

> You can make a pretty good and generally faithful fellow of an Indian by simply treating him fairly in business matters and helping him along now and then when his natural indolence or improvidence or bad luck has brought him to straits. But you can never completely depend on him or overcome the inherent fickleness of his nature until you have made a Christian of him and brought him thereby under that sense of personal responsibility not only to men, but to the Almighty, that religion teaches. Either in war or in peace, one Christian Indian is always worth two heathen ones!

From 1743 to 1746 Sir William, whose public duties did not take up more than a moiety of his time, continued to improve his estate and extend his commercial operations with unflagging energy. Notwithstanding that, in addition to his duties in connection with the Indian Commission, he was appointed colonel of the militia regiment for

the western district of Albany County in 1744, and king's magistrate for the same district in April, 1745, he still found time to transact his great and rapidly growing private business.

About this time he came to the conclusion that the live stock of the Mohawk Valley needed improvement, and to that end imported from England a considerable breeding stud of horses, together with a number of cattle and sheep. His papers and accounts indicate that he imported about thirty horses, thirty or forty head of cattle, and a hundred or more sheep. He selected the Irish hunter as the most available breed of horses for Colonial use in general, though in the accounts of his importations four Suffolk stallions appear. These, of course, were intended to improve the breed of draft-horses by crossing with the native mares. The cattle he imported came from Devonshire and Hereford. The sheep were English-bred Spanish merinos—a breed producing an exceeding fine wool. These importations were made from time to time in small lots during a period of three or four years. To his tenants he gave the services of his breeding animals free, and to his neighbors in general for a nominal consideration, in view of

the outlay he had incurred in importing them. So rapidly did his agricultural operations grow that by 1746 he began shipping flour to the West Indies in considerable quantity.

All the time he continued clearing land at the rate of from 250 to 300 acres a year, so that by the end of the year 1746 he had about 1,200 acres under his own cultivation, besides the large areas cleared and brought into tillage by his tenants, who now numbered over a hundred. Up to this time Sir William had not held any slaves, but in 1747 an estate in Dutchess County was sold at administrator's sale, in partition. This estate included nineteen slaves. Sir William bought the lot entire, though only about ten or eleven of them were able-bodied men or women, the rest being aged and infirm, or children. The men he employed chiefly in taking care of his horses and other live stock, while the women were occupied in his household. He provided comfortable cabins for them, and according to all accounts he was an easy master. He ultimately became the largest slaveholder in the colony of New York, possessing between sixty and seventy.

During this period the War of the Austrian Succession raged in Europe, but its effect in America did not begin to be felt to

any serious degree until 1745; and even then there were no great operations in the interior of the country. About all that occurred were raids by small parties against outlying settlements or posts. In 1746 an effort was made to combine the provincial forces of New England, New York, and Pennsylvania with a force of British regulars, for the reduction of Crown Point and an invasion of Canada by way of Lake Champlain. But the colonies could not reach an agreement as to quotas of men and proportions of money to be furnished. The British Government did not seem disposed to employ its regular troops in such an enterprise—in fact, the military operations of the English on the continent of Europe absorbed all the troops they had available, and the colonial garrisons were depleted rather than reenforced. The colonists, accordingly, during this struggle —which, in America, was known as "King George's War"—were left almost wholly to their own resources.

The only great event in America was the siege and capture of the French fortress of Louisburg on Cape Breton Island by a combined military and naval force, the troops being all Provincials except one company of regular sappers and miners and two compa-

nies of infantry. The fleet was commanded by Admiral Sir Peter Warren and the land forces by Colonel Sir William Pepperell of Massachusetts.[1] All the Provincial troops were furnished by the New England colonies, and though a contingent was to have been provided by New York, its organization was not completed in time to sail with the expedition. The taking of Louisburg was an exceedingly brilliant affair and reflected great credit upon the Provincial troops engaged in it. They were, of course, powerfully and decisively aided by Admiral Warren's fleet, which not only cut off and captured the French ships that tried to bring reenforcements and supplies to the garrison, but participated effectively in the bombardments. Finding that the Provincial volunteers were not highly expert in the use of heavy siege-guns, Admiral Warren landed a force of blue-jackets sufficient to work them. This landing force was commanded by Captain Warren Johnson of the 20-gun ship Avon, and brother of Sir William. The terms of the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle restored Louisburg to France,

[1] Pepperell was a native and resident of Kittery, in the present State of Maine—and Maine now claims him. But it was part of Massachusetts then, and for that reason I speak of Pepperell as "of Massachusetts."

to the bitter disgust of the colonies, particularly New England.

During the fall of 1747 a substantial agreement was reached between New England, New York, and New Jersey to invade Canada by way of Lake Champlain early in the spring of 1748. The quotas of men and money were agreed upon by commissioners appointed from each colony. Pennsylvania did not undertake to furnish a quota of men, but agreed to bear a share of the financial burdens. No attempt was made to enlist the cooperation of any colony south of Pennsylvania. The British Government was to furnish a siege-train with regular artillerists and two regiments of regular infantry. Sir William Johnson's share in this proposed enterprise was to have been an important one. In September, 1746, the Governor had abolished the Indian Board and appointed Sir William sole Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the colony of New York. This action of Governor Clinton had been confirmed by royal warrant, and Sir William was commissioned a colonel on the permanent establishment. The practical effect of this action was to take the control of Indian affairs out of the hands of the Assembly and vest it in an officer of the Crown, responsible directly to the king.

It was a bold step, but a logical one, and based upon the views Sir William had frequently expressed both in his correspondence with the Governor and in Council.

Sir William held that the Indians could not rightfully be held as under the jurisdiction of the Colonial Government, that they had thus far been so held by sufferance, or because no one had taken sufficient interest in them to assert their rights for them—which they could not do or did not know how to do themselves. He held that they had a government of their own, that they were not citizens, and that they were unrepresented in the body that legislated for them. This status, he argued, made them the wards of the king individually, and that their government was under the protection of the king.

As I have already remarked, the abolishment of the Board and the appointment of Sir William as sole superintendent, with military rank as an officer of the Crown, carried this theory into effect in fact, if not in name; and so long as the Colonial condition lasted, after that the relation was never changed, nor was attempt made to change it except in one instance, which will be noted later on. This somewhat detailed description of Sir William's status at the time under consideration

seems requisite to a clear understanding of his relation to the proposed expedition against Canada in the spring of 1748. He was to have command of a division composed of a brigade of Provincial troops under his own immediate command, and a thousand Indians to be commanded by Hendrick. And he was also to be second in command of the entire force, Sir William Pepperell having been selected for the command-in-chief. During the autumn of 1747 all arrangements were made to mobilize a force at least nine thousand strong, with a reserve of five thousand. The Iroquois had agreed to furnish not less than a thousand picked warriors. It was noted that the Senecas now, for the first time since the alliance between the English and the Six Nations was ratified, in 1710, displayed zeal and responded to the call for men with alacrity.

As an indication of the thoroughness with which this proposed invasion had been planned, it is worth while to observe that the scheme of preparation involved not only the mobilization of fourteen thousand troops in the early spring, but also provision for taking control of Lake Champlain. Three stout sloops were to be built during the winter at a convenient point near the south end of the

lake. These sloops were designed to carry one long 12-pounder each on a pivot amidships, and two swivels. In fact, at the time when the communication of the Duke of Newcastle reached Albany, considerable timber for the construction of these sloops had already been cut, and some of it shaped for use. As the French had no naval force whatever on the lake, it was estimated that these sloops could command its waters long enough to ensure the reduction of Crown Point, because, if the French had gunboats in the St. Lawrence of dimensions capable of passing the Sorel River, the ice would not be out before May, and it was confidently expected that Crown Point must fall before the end of April.

It was now considered that all requisite preparations for the spring campaign had been completed, when a communication was received from the Duke of Newcastle, then Prime Minister. In this communication the duke, in the name of the king, warmly approved the zeal and fidelity of the colonists, commended their preparations, and congratulated them upon their apparent unity of design. But he intimated that events were in progress in Europe which would be likely to render the proposed expedition unnecessary.

In those circumstances and in the interest of economy, the king had directed that the troops already assembled and ready to go into winter quarters at and about Albany be furloughed until April, retaining only a force of Provincials and Indians sufficient to guard the northern frontier. This action disappointed the white troops who had volunteered with so much alacrity, and it almost disheartened the Indians. But by liberal distribution of presents, as they started for their home, Sir William managed to allay in great measure their discontent.

There were about six hundred Indians in their camp near Cohoes and at Schaghticoke, and additional recruits were coming in every day. As all these men had been kept from their usual fall hunt, there was considerable destitution among the tribes during the winter, which, however, proved to be short and mild. The Assembly voted considerable sums to relieve them as far as possible. This was practically the end of "King George's War," so far as the colonies were concerned. The frontier, however, was strongly guarded during the winter, and in February, 1748, at the solicitation of the Governor, Sir William took command of the whole line of frontier defense, and held it until the peace of Aix-la-

Chapelle was promulgated. But no military event of moment occurred within the limits of his command during the winter or the ensuing spring.

By April, 1748, it became generally known that the war was practically over, and though the definitive peace of Aix-la-Chapelle was not promulgated until October of that year, a virtual armistice prevailed during the summer, both in Europe and America. The frontier defenses were considerably strengthened as spring opened, but there was no movement on either side. The French did not come south of Crown Point—which was their most advanced post—while the northern outpost of the Provincials was at the head or south end of Lake George, where Sir William had his field headquarters. During the spring and summer of 1748 the frontier force of the Provincials was about three thousand, including some four hundred Iroquois. The Provincials were quartered in four or five camps within easy supporting distance; some at the head of Lake George, some at the head of Lake Champlain, and others at Saratoga, Glens Falls, or where Fort Edward was afterward built, and the remainder at Fort Anne. The Indians remained at Schaghticoke and Cohoes.

The French had twelve hundred men—about half of them regulars—at Crown Point, and a large reserve of Canadian militia and Indians at Isle aux Noix. In this manner the two belligerents faced each other quietly during the summer of 1748. Sir William was, however, by no means idle personally during this interim. The abortive attempts that had been made in 1745, '46 and '47 to mobilize the Provincial forces of New York quickly had shown that the militia of Albany County was in a state of utter disorganization. Albany County at that time embraced the whole of New York Colony north and west of Dutchess and Ulster counties, together with the present State of Vermont. While this vast county was, on the whole, sparsely populated, the fact that it embodied the whole northern and western frontier open to invasion from Canada, made its militia organization of paramount importance. In June, 1748, as soon as he was sure that there would be no more hostilities, Governor Clinton appointed Sir William colonel-in-chief of the Albany County militia, with directions to reorganize it on his own plan *carte blanche.* "You may consider whatever you recommend as done," said the Governor in a personal letter accompanying the appointment and instructions. Sir Will-

iam thereupon proceeded with his task and effected a new organization, which stood the test of the next war, 1755–62, and lasted until the Revolution. The basis of this reorganization was regimental in the more populous districts, such as the valleys of the Hudson and the lower Mohawk, and independent companies in the sparsely settled outlying districts. Its result was the creation of five regiments of eight companies each, having a normal strength of seventy-five to the company, or six hundred to the regiment, and twelve independent companies of from sixty to seventy-five men each.

In July advices were received that the preliminary articles of peace were signed, and the frontier defense force was disbanded. The French evacuated Crown Point and the Indians on both sides buried the hatchet. During his command of the frontier defenses Sir William made two permanent improvements: he built through the forest a road practicable for supply wagons and artillery from the head of Lake George to Glens Falls on the Hudson, and another from the head of Lake Champlain, at Black Mountain, to Fort Anne, which was already connected with Sandy Hill on the Hudson by a practicable road. The Governor now appointed him

permanent colonel-in-chief of the Albany County militia, and he returned to his home at Mount Johnson, having, as he said, "done a deal of hard work for two years with mighty little to show for it."

On the whole, "King George's War," so far as the colonies were concerned, was an abortive affair. Except the brilliant exploit of taking Louisburg, there had been no action whatever worth mention in history. A few raids back and forth by the French and Indians on one side and Provincial backwoodsmen and Iroquois on the other; some cabins burned, several murders, and a few scalps, told the whole story for the interior frontier. But it served to teach the colonies lessons which proved of great value in the final and decisive struggle for empire in North America that was then only seven years distant. Those lessons were: first, the absolute need of unity in design and harmony in execution; second, that their situation required in peace a constant preparedness for instant war; and, third, that the balance of power on the northern frontier between the colonies and the French power in Canada was held by the Six Nations, and he who possessed influence to hold them loyal was the most important man in the colony.

And this war, desultory as it may have been, had demonstrated beyond dispute or doubt that that man was Sir William Johnson.

We have seen one good description of Sir William himself and his household. A little later than this (in 1751) Mrs. Julia Grant, the wife of Captain (afterward Major-General) Grant of the British Army, then in command of the small garrison of regulars at Albany, visited Mount Johnson and painted a portrait of Sir William. The lady was an artist of no mediocre ability, and during her eight years' sojourn on the New York frontier painted many clever portraits of distinguished people, including Colonel and Mrs. Schuyler, Solomon Van Rensselaer and others. She also kept a vivacious journal, which was afterward printed in Edinburgh. In this journal Lady Grant pen-pictures Sir William as follows:

. . . A little scant of six feet high—say five feet eleven and one-half inches. Neck massive, shoulders broad, chest deep and full, limbs large and showing every sign of great physical strength. Head large and finely shaped. Countenance open, frank, and always beaming with good-nature and humor—a real Irishman as he is for wit. Eyes large, a sort of black-gray or grayish black in color. Hair dark brown with a tinge of auburn in certain

lights. In conversation, he is a most delightful person, relating recollections of his dealings with the Indians or discussing the classic authors or the literature of the day with equal readiness and ease. His mode of living is that of an English gentleman at his country seat, and I was astonished to find on this remote frontier, almost in the shade of primeval forest, a table loaded with delicacies and Madeiras, ports and Burgundies of the rarest vintage. His table is seldom without guests, and his hospitality is a byword the region round. During my stay he had Indian chiefs to dine with him several times. Their attire was the same as white people, and for the most part they conversed in English. This disappointed me, because I wished to sit at table with genuine Indians in blankets and leggings and talking nothing but their gibberish through an interpreter. Among those I met at Colonel Johnson's table were the venerable and noble-looking old chief Hendrick, now over seventy years of age; his brother Abraham, about sixty years of age, chief of a Mohawk clan and father of Caroline, the beautiful young Indian woman who is the mistress of his household; also Nicklaus Brant, chief of the Upper Castle Mohawks, a man of prodigious silence and the most grave and solemn courtesy. . .

Colonel Johnson is the soul of method. At breakfast I tell him I wish a half-hour's sitting some time in the day. We agree on an exact time by the clock. The Colonel then mounts his horse

and dashes here and there about his estate overseeing everything. At the appointed moment he dismounts at the door and is ready for the sitting. When the half hour is done he is away again as swiftly as he came. He must have fifty or sixty people in his employ besides the negroes and he oversees everything that they do. Marvellous! And then he attends to a mass of complicated public business besides!