

## CHAPTER II

### DOMESTIC LIFE AND THE ALBANY CONGRESS 1745-1754

WE may now turn briefly from the public to the private side of Sir William Johnson's life. Late in 1745 his white wife, Katharine, died suddenly, leaving him with three little children—Anne, five years old; John, three; and Mary, a baby one year old.<sup>1</sup> At first he

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<sup>1</sup> Parkman, in his *Montcalm and Wolfe* (vol. i, p. 298), briefly surveys the character of Sir William Johnson from the Boston point of view. Its tone is half-cynical, half-patronizing, and it may be left without comment so far as Sir William is concerned. But in the course of it he goes clear out of his way to cast a slur upon the memory of Katharine Weisenburg, who, though an unpretentious Mohawk Dutch girl, was an honorable woman, a faithful wife, and a devoted mother. After a brief description of Mount Johnson he says: "Here presided for many years a Dutch or German wench whom he (Sir William) finally married."

This is not only a painfully ill-natured but a grossly inaccurate statement. Johnson married Katharine Weisenburg within a week after he had bought her indentures from Mr. Phillips, as previously related; and she never "presided" at Mount Johnson except as his wife. Whether she was a

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employed as nurse for them a worthy woman to whom history has given no more intimate recognition than the remark that she was a "Dutch widow." She was undoubtedly a faithful nurse, but Sir William soon detected that his little daughter Anne and his little son John, who were just beginning to talk, rapidly acquired the Mohawk Dutch "brogue" of their nurse. This he did not desire. So he found other employment in his establishment

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"wench" or not may be a question of lexicography as between Boston and the rest of mankind. The fact is that, in this silly slur upon the memory of a good woman, Parkman betrays the besetting weakness that mars in many places the results of his wonderful research and often besmears the general purity of his style. That weakness was his inexorable prejudice and incorrigible bias in favor of everything and everybody of Massachusetts and against everything and everybody everywhere else. The reader of Parkman and Parkman alone would imagine that Massachusetts, almost single-handed, sustained the brunt of all the French and Indian wars, and finally, with some trifling assistance from the British navy and a few English regulars, drove the French out of North America! As for the other colonies, they simply looked on. Their men, most of whom were "boors," cut little or no figure in the contest, and their women were mainly "wenches."

In Sir William's case the grudge was personal. Massachusetts, who furnished the largest contingent both of men and supplies for the campaign of 1755, bitterly resented the appointment of a New Yorker to the supreme command. Her people considered Colonel (afterward General) Phineas Lyman entitled to the leadership. Parkman simply inherited the local spite and jealousy of his province.

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for the good Dutch woman, and secured the services of a middle-aged Scotch-Irish woman, the widow of a non-conformist minister of New York city, whom Lady Warren found available and sent to him. This lady proved an ideal nursery-governess, because she was not only a capable nurse, but a well-educated woman besides, and able to instruct the children as well as to care for them. The name of this lady was Mrs. Barclay (also spelled "Barkley" in some of the manuscripts), and she passed the rest of her life under the Johnson roof. Sir William now remained in single blessedness about two years, beset by match-makers, from his aunt, Lady Warren, in New York, to his aristocratic friends in Albany. But in the fall of 1747 he astonished all his friends.

One of his biographers—and by far the best of them in a general sense—writing of the events of the year 1748, says (Stone, p. 327, vol. i):

It was about this period—though I have not been able to learn the exact date—that Colonel Johnson employed as his housekeeper Mary Brant, or "Miss Molly" as she was called, a sister of the celebrated Chief Thayendanega (Joseph Brant), with whom he lived until his decease, and by whom he had several children.

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In the Brant manuscripts the statement is made by the chief that he was born in 1742, and that his sister Mary was "nearly seven years his senior." This would have brought the date of Mary's birth in the year 1735, and she would therefore have been in her thirteenth year in 1748—an age hardly ripe enough for the domestic responsibilities of such an establishment as that of Sir William. However, "about this time"—that is to say, late in 1747—he did employ a young Indian woman as his housekeeper; but she was not Mary Brant, who, by the way, did not achieve that distinction until about six years later.

This young woman was a daughter of the Chief Abraham, sachem of the Lower Castle Mohawks, and when she attracted the attention of Sir William was about twenty-two years old. She was reputed to be the handsomest girl in the Iroquois nation. Indeed, there is, or used to be, among the older residents of the Mohawk Valley a tradition that Abraham's wife was a white woman of Holland Dutch antecedents. If so, this girl was a half-breed. And, more important than that, if the legend be true, her elder sister, who married Nicklaus Brant and became the mother of Joseph and Mary, was a half-breed also, which would put a strain of white blood

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in the veins of the great captain—unquestionably the greatest of American Indians. I do not believe this tradition. Chief Abraham's wife may have been an unusually light-colored Indian woman. The Iroquois were universally lighter in complexion than any other American Indians, and the Mohawks and Oneidas were the lightest of all. So marked was this peculiarity, taken together with their superior civilization, that some of the early writers—mainly Jesuit Fathers—considered them a different race from the common aborigines.

A noted student of Indian life and character, Professor Donaldson, explains it on purely physical grounds, which is doubtless the true view. He says that for generations—even before the white man was known on these shores—the Iroquois had lived in comfortable habitations, tilled the soil, raised grain and fruits, and, generally speaking, had much better shelter, better cookery, better sanitary arrangements, and altogether more of the good things of life than any other Indians. This mode of living had tended to “bleach out” their complexions and endow them with other physical advantages of which for centuries they had availed themselves to gain an ascendancy among Indian nations that

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finally came to be undisputed. We may, therefore, take it for granted that Chief Abraham's wife was simply unusually white even for a Mohawk woman, but a full-blooded Indian nevertheless.

The girl who placed herself under Sir William's protection was, like all the Hendrick family, Christianized. She had been baptized under the name of Caroline, and had received as complete an education as the mission school at Fort Hunter and a private school in Schenectady could impart. The relation she so willingly assumed to Sir William may seem equivocal in the lights of our time; but whether there was any marriage ceremony or not, it was a case of unconcealed cohabitation, accompanied by child-bearing, which, after all, under the statutes of those days, amounted to a common-law marriage.

At this point the view adopted by W. Max Reid of Amsterdam, N. Y., author of a most excellent History of the Mohawk Valley, is of interest. It may be premised that Mr. Reid is more thoroughly conversant with the history, legends, and traditions of the Mohawk Valley than any other man now living, and probably more so than any other man ever was, except Horatio Seymour. In one of his entertaining papers recently published

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Mr. Reid remarks on the history and genealogy of the two most famous families in the Iroquois Nation:

I have been informed on indubitable authority that after the death of Katharine Weisenburg, the mother of his son, John, and daughters, Mary and Nancy, he (Sir William) had a Dutch widow as housekeeper, but that she did not remain with him long, as her place was taken in 1747 by a niece of Hendrick, being the daughter of his brother, Abraham, who is frequently spoken of in the Documentary History of New York. As in the case of Molly Brant, Sir William did not wed this Indian girl, who took the English name Caroline. She had three children by Sir William—one son and two daughters. The son was named William and the daughters Charlotte and Caroline. The mother died in giving birth to the third child. William was the first born. This half-breed son is the William Johnson, alias Tag-che-un-to, who is mentioned in Sir William's will as "William of Canajoharie." The date of Caroline's death was in 1753, which consequently makes the birth of Caroline, the half-breed, in 1753; and the installation of Molly Brant as Sir William's mistress was subsequent to that date. Probably this occurred soon after the death of Caroline as her daughters (Charlotte and Caroline) are said to have been adopted by Molly and treated by her as her own children, while William, the half-breed boy, was mainly raised by his grand-

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father, Abraham, or his uncle, "Little Abe," at Canajoharie Castle at Danube.

The history of the two daughters is of interest. Charlotte, the eldest, married a young British officer shortly before the Revolution, but who afterward joined the Continental army and fell at Monmouth Court House. His name was Henry Randall. They had two children, one named Charlotte Randall, who married George King. George and Charlotte King had a daughter Charlotte, who was the grandmother of my informant.<sup>1</sup>

The other daughter of Molly Brant's predecessor (Caroline) whose name was also Caroline, married a man named Michael Byrne, a clerk in Sir William's office of Indian affairs. Byrne was killed at Oriskany in Butler's Rangers. His young widow, Caroline Johnson, went with the Brants to Canada and afterward married an Indian agent named MacKim, whose descendants are still living in Canada.

Brant, who went to England with Hendrick and others in 1710, was the grandfather of Joseph and Molly Brant. When Joseph was born, in 1742, his grandfather was probably between sixty and seventy years old. Brant's father was called Nickus, or Nicklaus, by the Dutch. Stone anglicizes the name and calls him Nicholas Brant. He must have

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<sup>1</sup> There was a third child—a boy—named Morgan Randall, after General Daniel Morgan, in whose riflemen Henry Randall served.



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been at least thirty years old when Joseph was born, and Molly was at least six years older than Joseph.

The mother of Joseph and Molly was also a daughter of Abraham (the brother of Hendrick) and a sister or half-sister of "Little Abe" of the lower castle at Fort Hunter. This made her a niece of Hendrick also, and a sister of the girl Caroline, who went to live with Sir William in 1747.

It is also said that Joseph Brant's wife was a daughter of the Oneida chief of Sauquoit, and her mother was a daughter of Hendrick. So it will be seen by the foregoing that the families of Brant and Hendrick were closely interrelated. As Molly Brant's mother was the sister of Caroline, Molly's predecessor was her own aunt, and Sir William might be called her uncle.

Returning to William Johnson, the half-breed mentioned in his will: He was educated by Sir William at Dr. Wheelock's school at Lebanon, Conn., and was at the battle of Oriskany with Brant. Here he was killed in a hand-to-hand conflict with the half-breed Thomas Spencer, who played a conspicuous part with Herkimer's troops and at the siege of Fort Schuyler. Incidentally, Thomas Spencer is said to have been a son of the missionary, Rev. Elihu Spencer, by an Oneida girl, and was born at Oghwaga about the year 1755.

About a year after the death of Caroline Hendrick, Sir William offered his protection

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and affection to Mary Brant. She accepted, and outlived him; their life together during a period of twenty years—1754-74—having been by universal account of the times happy and affectionate. Mary Brant was not as handsome or as majestic a woman as her aunt and predecessor, Caroline, but she was a very pretty girl nevertheless, and developed into a woman of much tact, sterling virtues, and a model housewife. She was about nineteen years old when she accepted the protection of Sir William, and survived him many years. She bore him nine children—two boys and seven girls—but one of the latter died in infancy. Of these children the eldest was a boy, to whom they gave the name of Peter Warren Johnson, after the admiral; the second was a girl named Elizabeth, the third a girl named Magdalene, the fourth a girl named Margaret, the fifth a boy named George, the sixth a girl named Mary, the seventh a girl named Susanne, and the eighth a girl named Anne.

In the text of his will he describes these as “my natural children by my housekeeper, Mary Brant.”

Young William Johnson is the only one of Caroline Hendrick's children mentioned or provided for in the will. But this may be ex-

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plained on the ground that the two girls, Charlotte and Caroline, had been married some time before his death—Charlotte in 1770 or '71 and Caroline, a year or two later—and Sir William had undoubtedly made what he considered sufficient provision for them in the marriage settlements.

When the Tories were expelled from the Mohawk Valley in 1776, two years after the death of Sir William, Mary Brant and her children went with them and settled on Grand River, or the Oise, as the French called it. Of the two sons—Peter and George—no trace seems to have been left in history. The six girls all married white men, one of them becoming the wife of Dr. Kerr, a surgeon in the British army. Mrs. Kerr was an accomplished woman, a clever writer, and wrote two or three interesting little books on the customs and beliefs of the race to which she half belonged.

There was a legend, which most of Sir William's biographers have adopted, to the effect that his attention was first attracted to Mary Brant at a militia muster in Canajoharie. It was said that she mounted the horse of an officer and rode furiously around the parade-ground several times, her long black hair and loose red robes streaming in

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the wind; at last, riding up to where the great man stood, lost in admiration, and leaping gracefully from the back of the panting steed into his stalwart arms.

All this is very pretty; but the fact is that Sir William had known Mary Brant from the time she was ten years old, his intimate acquaintance with Nicklaus Brant and his family having begun very soon after his first settlement at Warrensbush. When Caroline Hendrick was in her fatal illness her sister, Brant's wife, came to nurse her, and Mary accompanied her mother. Not long after that the arrangement was made by which Mary became the mistress of his household.

Mary Brant had been educated in the common English branches in the Manor school at Canajoharie, where her father lived before he became chief of the Upper Castle Mohawks. He had a comfortable frame house at Canajoharie and lived and dressed altogether after the fashion of white men. The female members of his family were never made to do the usual drudgery of squaws. He owned a good farm close to the town and cultivated it as well as any of his white neighbors. He was, as Mrs. Grant says, "a man of prodigious silence"—noted for his taciturnity and for his keen faculty of observa-

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tion as well. Whenever Sir William had an extremely delicate mission to fulfil with the Cayugas or Senecas, who were usually more or less recalcitrant, he always sent Nicklaus Brant. Beyond question, Sir William's intimate connection with the Hendrick and Brant families was more potent than any other agency in giving him the control and ascendancy over the Iroquois which he so successfully maintained through the twenty-odd trying and troublous years that immediately preceded the Revolution. Many times, when Sir William got hold of an obdurate and troublesome delegation of Senecas or Cayugas, he would turn them over to "Lady Molly," as she was commonly called after he was made a baronet—which was the next year after their alliance—and she "never failed to 'Mollyfy' them," as he used to say. Of this period in Sir William's life, Dr. Wheelock says:

I have seen at Mount Johnson and also at Johnson Hall sixty to eighty Indians at one time lodging under tents on the lawn and taking their meals from tables made of pine boards spread under the trees. They were delegations from all the Iroquois tribes, come to pow-wow with their great white brother, "Warragh-i-ya-gey" (the Indian name they gave to Sir William when they adopted him into the Iroquois nation and gave him a council-

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seat in the "Long House"). These visits must have been very expensive to Sir William, and he told me that never more than half their cost was defrayed out of the public exchequer.

"They say," said the baronet to me once, "that it is not right or fair that I should be superintendent over the Indians and an Indian trader at the same time. Why, bless me, doctor, my profits from the Indian trade do not reimburse me for my outlay in entertaining these delegations and giving presents to their members!

"The Indians are honest," he pursued. "I have often supplied one Indian or a small party living as far away as the Southern Senecas on Cattaraugus Creek or the Conewango—I have often supplied such with a complete hunting and trapping outfit—guns, ammunition, traps, etc., with blankets, woolen shirts, and other clothing—all on absolute credit. If they did not die or get killed by the Catawbas or Shawnese—their natural enemies—they would always come back and pay as soon as they got wherewithal to pay with."

Griffis, in his *Life of Sir William Johnson*, says that "after the death of his wife, Catharine, Sir William lived with various mistresses, etc." But Mr. Reid, a much more studious and careful historian, rejects this tradition. It is true that the baronet lived in a morganatic fashion with two Indian women at different times. But all the circumstantial

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evidence points to the conclusion that he was faithful to them, and that he was not in the least degree inclined to promiscuous licentiousness. He was always as solicitous for the welfare of his half-breed children as any father could be for any children; and as he was temperate and moderate in all things, it is fair to presume that he was equally so in his relations with women, white or red. In fact, the dignity he had to maintain to hold his influence over the Indians must have been sacrificed instantly had this been otherwise. The truth undoubtedly is that he was true and constant to the two Indian women with whom he lived openly in the sight of everybody—living with one of them about six years and with the other twenty years.

This survey of Sir William's peculiar domestic life has carried us to a point far ahead of the main thread of our narrative; but necessarily so, because I considered it advisable to treat that branch of the subject in a single sketch, rather than filter its incidents here and there in detached parts throughout his history. Many students of Sir William's life and some of his biographers—notably Griffis—have chosen to believe, or affected to believe, that his selection of Indian mistresses for the head of his do-

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mestic establishment, when he could have had his pick among refined, well-connected, and thoroughly educated white women, argues the lurking of a debased trait in his otherwise lofty character.

On this point, it seems to me, that argument would be wasted. Without discussion, I am inclined to believe with Mr. Reid, that the element of statecraft entered largely into the sum-total of reasons for these singular alliances, and that he chose, first, Caroline Hendrick, and, after her, Mary Brant, because he wanted a housewife who could make his Indian guests—of whom his house was seldom in lack—feel at home. His fortunes depended on his influence with the Indians. Without that he could never have been anything more than a settler in the Mohawk Valley; richer, perhaps, than his neighbors, but still only a settler. His command of the Iroquois just at the time when their adherence to the British cause was vital to the objects of British policy, made him the most important, if not actually the greatest, man in the colony. No white woman could have made Sir William's red henchmen feel at home in his house as Caroline Hendrick or Mary Brant could. If this was one of his motives, it was creditable at least to his ambi-



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tion, if not to his sense of propriety. But the point of propriety itself must be measured by the standard of morality prevailing in his days, not ours. And even if Caroline and Mary were only housekeepers or mistresses, and if, as he says in his will, their children were only "natural," yet his fidelity to them and his affection and solicitude for the children they bore him can not be forgotten or neglected in the scales of charity.

Returning now to consideration of Sir William's public life, it may be said that after the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle he passed nearly a year in almost undivided attention to the affairs of his estate. The only interruption of any note he experienced was the arrangement and management of a grand council, at Albany, of the governors of the New England colonies, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Virginia with the chiefs of the Indians friendly to the English and the colonists, or who were willing to be friendly in the future. This grand council was opened on the 20th of July, and lasted about ten days. There were present seven colonial governors, each accompanied by members of his staff; thirty Indian chiefs of high rank, each attended by several especially distinguished warriors of his tribe; and

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the Indian superintendents of Virginia, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and New York.

The Iroquois were by no means alone in representation. Chiefs were there from the Delawares of western Pennsylvania; the fierce and hitherto untamable Shawnese of what is now Ohio; Mingoës, Wyandots, Adirondacks—who came from territory claimed and hitherto held by the French—together with the “River Indians” (remnants of the former Pequots, Mohegans, Narragansetts, and other aborigines of New England). Perhaps the most interesting figure in this assemblage was the great war-chief of the Genesee Senecas, Hi-o-ka-to, who for years had vowed that he would never speak one word with an Englishman. Hi-o-ka-to was the husband of the celebrated Mary Jemison, a white woman, who, captured by the Algonquins when a little girl, had been retaken by the Senecas, and adopted by them. As soon as she grew to womanhood Hi-o-ka-to, then a redoubted warrior and knight errant of the tribe, nearly forty years of age, asked her to share his wigwam—or rather his house—which was a comfortable log cabin. She consented, and lived with him until his death, many years afterward. She wrote a narrative, which is doubtless the most interesting

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personal description of life among the Indians ever printed. In it she says of her stalwart brave after his death:

Ferocious as he may have been on the war-path, and savage as he may have been in battle, I can only say that no husband could have been kinder to wife than he was to me, and no man, white or any other color, could have been gentler than he was when inside the four walls of our cabin. In all our life together, he never spoke one cross word to me, and I have often seen him curb his fierce temper toward others simply because I happened to be present.

Governor Clinton and Sir William considered it a great point gained when Hi-o-ka-to was induced to attend this conference. Savage as he was, the Seneca war-chief did not lack ready wit. Some years later, during another council, Sir William, in a bantering way, asked him in the Iroquois tongue, "Why didn't you bring your white wife with you, Hi-o-ka-to? I would like to introduce her to my Indian wife." "Because," replied the chief, "I was afraid you white folks would steal her, the same as you do pretty much everything else we poor Indians have that is worth stealing!"

A remarkable and somewhat amusing feature of this grand council was the fact that

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the venerable senior chief of the Iroquois, Hendrick, was unable to attend, and asked the council to accept his brother Abraham as his representative—giving as the reason the fact that he was at that moment *prostrated by an acute attack of inflammatory gout!* A rather singular malady for an American Indian! Perhaps the old chief had availed himself too freely of his nephew-in-law's proverbial liberality with his "crusty old port" and "nut-brown Madeira!"

Toward the end of the grand council—on its sixth day—Chief Abraham made a speech, addressed particularly to the Senecas and Cayugas. This speech was provoked by some remarks made by Onnasdego, chief of the Onondagas, in which that orator accused the English of neglecting the western Iroquois, and thereby leaving their hearts open to the blandishments of the French emissaries. Abraham spoke in English, so that the assembled governors and members of their staffs could readily understand what he was saying. But he had provided interpreters to translate his speech as he went along to those Indians present who could not understand the English language. Lack of space forbids reproduction of his remarks. One quotation may serve as a sample:

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“You complain,” he said, “that the English, the Colonists, do not trust you. How can they when you do not trust them? There can be no confidence between two unless both share it alike. There can never be faith on one side and doubt on the other without distrust on both sides. And wherever there is distrust no real friendship can exist. You Western Iroquois listen to the silver tongues of French priests and emissaries whose only object is to lure you to ruin that their cause may profit by it. They do not love you. They would not give you a gourdful of succotash if you were starving. But when have the English and the Colonists failed to help you in distress? Put away the French! Send them across the Lake! Tell them to practise their bows and scrapes and grimaces upon the stupid Indians of Canada—not upon the noble Iroquois!”

To Abraham’s speech a reply was made by Kayaghshota, chief of the “Old Castle” or Lake Senecas, whose village occupied the present site of Geneva. No record of the Seneca’s speech seems to have been preserved. Mr. Croghan, who kept the minutes of the council, says simply that it was “an eloquent and plausible defense of the vacillating conduct of his tribe.” Kayaghshota, it may be interesting to remark, was the uncle of the famous Red Jacket—probably the most accomplished and powerful orator the Indian race ever produced.

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This grand council was one of the most picturesque events in the history of the colonies. Many of the chiefs brought their wives with them, and some brought their children. All were provided with new clothing by Governor Clinton as soon as they arrived, together with a liberal supply of the gaudy ornaments so much prized by the Indians; and the streets of Albany were daily thronged by the gaily clad sons and daughters of the forest enjoying an ovation far beyond their wildest dreams. For many years afterward the proudest boast of an Indian would be: "I was at the great Albany Council!" Stone says:

The old Dutch city had in fact seldom witnessed such a sight. Here were gathered Indians from the far West, many of whom were destined to redden their tomahawks in the blood of so many brave garrisons under the great Pontiac. Here were many of the River Indians—remnants of once powerful tribes—whose grandfathers had followed Uncas and Miantonomoh to battle, and had taken their last stand with the ill-fated King Philip. In one spot a painted warrior might have been seen smoking his pipe as he recounted to his wondering companions the sights seen in his morning's stroll; while everywhere groups of picturesquely attired Indians, with nodding plumes and variegated blankets, wandered through the streets gaz-

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ing with curious eye upon the novelties of civilization.

The results of this council were more satisfactory and on a larger scale than any previously held. The Iroquois renewed all their ancient covenants with the king. The Senecas, who had never before formally acknowledged the covenants of 1684 and 1710, now gave in their complete adhesion through Hi-o-ka-to, Captain Jean Montour<sup>1</sup> (himself a

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<sup>1</sup> There were three Montours: Jean, born about 1715, André, born about 1720, and Henry. They were the sons of Catharine Montour by a young half-breed chief of the Niagara Senecas, who took her name. Catharine Montour was a daughter of the Count de Frontenac by a Huron woman. She was born at Fort Frontenac about 1692, and her name figures in a curious old document called Accusation against Louis de Buade, Comte de Frontenac, in which, among other things, he is charged with "debasing the morals of the colony by propagating more than sixty half-breeds!" Jean and André Montour were both chiefs of high rank in the Seneca nation. Catharine Montour received a good education in a convent at Montreal. But in 1710, during Queen Anne's War, while journeying from Montreal to Fort Frontenac, she was captured by a raiding party of Senecas and taken to their village at Black Rock. Here she soon afterward married the young chief, who took her name and she seemed perfectly contented. At any rate, upon the exchange of captives that followed the Peace of Utrecht, she refused to leave her husband and spent her life among the Senecas. After the death of her husband in 1735 she became female chief, or Queen in her own right, and ruled the Niagara and Southern Senecas until her death in 1752. She carefully educated her children, Jean, André,

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French half-breed), and the Tonawanda chief "Black Loon"; all of whom had hitherto been opposed to English influence. They agreed to expel all French emissaries and priests from their territory, and they also promised to arrest the most pestiferous of them, "Jean Coeur,"<sup>1</sup> and deliver him up to the Colonial authorities. They never kept this promise, but they expelled "Jean Coeur" with the rest. They agreed to hold no further communication with the French, to forbid the residence of French interpreters in their midst, and to prohibit all trade or barter with French traders; together with many other things the English desired.

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Henry, and three girls. One of her grandchildren was the famous "Queen Esther," who practically commanded the Indians in the massacre of Wyoming. Jean and André Montour were conspicuous in the old French War, in Pontiac's Rebellion, and in the Revolution. They were good warriors and hard fighters, but held reputations for humanity equal to that of Joseph Brant. Henry never achieved fame.

<sup>1</sup> In the text we have followed the orthography of the Colonial Documentary Records; but there was no "Jean Coeur." The person meant was Joncaire, a captain in the French service and for many years the principal agent and emissary of the Canadian Government among the Western Indians. We shall have occasion to refer to him frequently later on. At the time under consideration he was what might be called "principal intelligence officer" of the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs, and had his headquarters at Fort Niagara.



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The Governor then requested them to give a list of articles they needed to make good their losses during the late war. The list was rather formidable. Among other things, they wanted a thousand guns, with hunting-knives, hatchets, flints, and ammunition; two thousand blankets; a large quantity of red flannel cloth; farming utensils, such as hoes, spades, iron plows, sickles, axes, etc.; cooking utensils; some large kettles, suitable for making salt from the salt-springs, and maple-sugar from the sap of trees, etc., etc. The total footed up prodigiously. But the Governor—or the assembled governors—promised that the list should be filled out, and they kept their word.

Prior to Sir William Johnson's time it had not been the policy to arm the Indians indiscriminately. But he took the view that unless well armed and practised in the use of their weapons, they would be of little value as allies, and from his first official connection with Indian affairs he had done all he could to provide them with serviceable guns and plenty of ammunition. At that time the rifle was little known outside of the trading-zone of Old Lancaster, Pa., where the manufacture of rifled weapons in America was begun by a colony of Swiss gunsmiths in 1729—hardly

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twenty years before the Albany Council—and, at the time under consideration (1749), Lancaster still enjoyed the monopoly of rifle-making in this country. A few specimens had found their way into New York, and Sir William had a very fine one, made by Deckert, which he bought while attending the Treaty Council at Lancaster in 1744. But the production of rifles was limited, and there was nothing like a general supply of them.

The regulation musket—cumbrous, heavy, and carrying an ounce ball—was not suited to the use of the Indians, who wanted a lighter gun of smaller bore. So, among the first things Sir William did when he became Indian Commissioner, was to design a gun specially adapted to the Indian's requirements. It was three feet long in the barrel and about four feet two inches over all, smooth bore, carried a half-ounce spherical bullet, and could be used either with ball or with small shot. This was known for many years as the "Indian-trade smooth bore," and was not completely supplanted by the rifle on the frontier until after the beginning of the nineteenth century. The barrels and locks were made and proved in Birmingham and then shipped to this country, where the stocks were fitted by Colonial gunsmiths. Twelve hundred of these guns

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were ordered immediately after the council, and in due time they were in the hands of the Indians. The other articles wanted were more easily procured, and the distribution of them was begun at once.

Philip Van Courtlandt, who as a young boy attended this council with his father, the Patron, relates the amusing incident that Hi-o-ka-to took a great fancy to the garb of a Highlander he happened to see in Albany, and asked the Governor to give him a Highland outfit. The Governor succeeded in finding a shirt, kilt, and tartan that would fit his stalwart proportions, and the great war-chief of the Genesee Senecas strutted around Albany as a Highlander to the infinite delight of the rising generation and the admiration of the women of his own race. And long afterward it was his custom to appear on state occasions in his own tribe clad in the plaid and tartan of the Forty-second Highlanders. The council adjourned the 30th of July, with a grand outdoor banquet, at which were present over a hundred Indians and as many white people. Then the Indians went quietly back to their forests and peace reigned supreme.

The next two years passed without special event. Sir William had recently come into possession of another large tract of land,

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which was patented in 1753 as the "Kingsboro Patent"—though he took possession of his part of it and began to improve it more than two years before the date of the patent. This afterward became known as the "Johnstown tract." It lay some distance north of the Mohawk River and several miles west of Mount Johnson. Improving this new tract and managing his great farm and mills on the Chuctenunda near Mount Johnson, together with his official duties as Indian Superintendent, colonel-in-chief of the Albany County militia, and king's magistrate, must have kept his hands full. Yet he found a good deal of time for writing and reading, and for such diversions as horse-racing and hunting.

In 1751 the first—and perhaps the only—really unpleasant episode in his public career occurred. During the late war he had expended large sums of money from his private purse for the public service over and above the amounts currently appropriated by the Assembly. Most of these expenditures were for the maintenance of the Indians he had mobilized for the two abortive attempts to organize expeditions against Crown Point, and for the invasion of Canada. During this period he had also maintained the white gar-

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ri-son of Oswego for a considerable time beyond the expiration of a contract he had for that service. The total amount of his private expenditure in these directions was nine thousand nine hundred and seventy-six pounds sterling and some shillings and pence—nearly \$50,000.

These expenditures were under two heads: first, those which had been submitted to Governor Clinton and approved by him before disbursement; and, second, those approved by the Governor after disbursement. The first amounted to £5,700; the last to £4,276. During the session of 1750-51 Sir William submitted these accounts to the Committee of Supply in the Assembly and asked reimbursement. After long consideration, the committee reported and the Assembly passed two resolutions directing payment of the £5,700, which had been approved by the Governor before disbursement. But they also passed a resolution directing further investigation of the £4,276, approved by the Governor after disbursement. In debate on these resolutions, during which Sir William was present in the Assembly Hall, severe animadversions were made upon the "close corporation" that was alleged to exist between the Governor, Chief-Justice DeLancey, the Attorney-Gen-

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eral, and Sir William. In the course of the debate one member of the Assembly—Mr. Hardenburgh, of Ulster—referred in rather caustic terms to the fact that Sir William had for several years “filled the apparently incongruous, if not wholly incompatible, stations of Superintendent of Indian Affairs and Indian Trader on a large scale at the same time!”

After hearing this, Sir William left the hall of the Assembly, and the same afternoon sent a note to Mr. Hardenburgh asking him if he intended by those remarks to impugn his personal integrity. Sir William was at that time the guest of Mr. DeLancey, in New York, and that gentleman carried the note. Mr. Hardenburgh promptly replied by inquiring whether he (Sir William) intended his note as preliminary to a demand for satisfaction. To this Sir William responded at once as follows:

DEAR SIR: Replying to your inquiry in reply to my note by the hands of Mr. DeLancey, permit me to say that the idea of a demand for satisfaction never entered my mind. Nor have I entertained any thought of individual grievance at your hands. Had you answered that the condition of my accounts and my relation to the Indians did seem to involve my personal integrity, I should simply

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have given you the key to the vault where my books of account are kept, and requested you to examine them at your own leisure and in your own way.

As for "satisfaction," permit me to say: first, that I am well aware of the parliamentary privilege which averts personal responsibility for language uttered in debate in a legislative body; and, second, I believe the practise of dueling is always barbarous and often murderous. I should be sorry if I thought I had a repute for courage that could be sustained only by fighting duels. Believe me, my dear sir, that I shall always keep all my bullets and all my marksmanship for the enemies of my country! I shall never visit them upon any of my own countrymen who may be hostile to me personally.

I have the honor to be, with profound respect,

Your Most Obedient Servant,

WILLIAM JOHNSON.

It took a pretty courageous man—and an Irishman at that—to thus denounce and flout the practise of dueling in the year 1751. The Assembly adjourned two days after that, leaving the £4,276 for further consideration. Mr. Hardenburgh seems to have been impressed by Sir William's attitude, because, at the next session, when Mr. Holland moved "consideration of the unsettled accounts of Colonel William Johnson," Mr. Hardenburgh

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seconded the motion, and an appropriation to reimburse him for his outlay of £4,276 of private funds in the public service was passed under suspension of the rules.

In the meantime, however, Sir William had resigned the office of Sole Superintendent of Indian Affairs, and, though the Governor and many others besought him to withdraw the resignation, he remained firm. He knew very well that no one in the Assembly bore any malice toward him personally. But he also knew that a considerable majority of the Assembly hated the Governor, and that, in attacking him about his accounts, they were only clubbing the Governor over his shoulders. Still, it was a thankless position; he was tired of the eternal bickerings between the Governor and the Assembly, and he wanted to place himself out of range of their fusillade. Besides, his private business was being neglected, and, ambitious as he was for public life and public honors, his first love was always his home, his children, his dusky sweetheart, his horses, his cattle, his wide-spreading lands, and his buzzing mills.

Every overture was made to him to resume the superintendency. Finally, after the Assembly had paid his accounts in full, he told the Governor that whenever his services in



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dealing with the Indians might seem desirable, he would accept a temporary appointment to visit them or confer with them as a special envoy, but under no circumstances would he resume the permanent superintendency. The result was that the Governor did not fill his place, but used him from time to time on special missions, as occasion required.

The Indians, as soon as they heard of Sir William's resignation, took it deeply to heart. Runners were sent from the Lower Mohawk Castle all through the Iroquois Nation by Hendrick, asking for a council of chiefs post-haste. In a few days quite a delegation gathered, including Captain Jean Montour of the Senecas, whom the runners happened to find visiting his wife's people at Onondaga Castle. The chiefs reached Albany, where the Governor then was temporarily staying, late at night, and they waited on him early the next morning, requesting a private interview. This was, of course, granted, and as soon as the doors were closed, Hendrick said:

We have come to consult with our Brother Corlear (their name for all the governors) in relation to Colonel Johnson. We have just heard that he has resigned. When the war was breaking out, your Excellency recommended him to us, and you then told us that we might consider anything he

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said as being spoken by yourself. So as we had had no hand in his appointment we have done nothing to induce his resignation. Judge, therefore, the shock we felt when he sent us a belt of love and peace, with a letter saying he had resigned and would be our superintendent no more. We can not express our feelings. He must come back to us. No one can take his place in our hearts. We can never learn to believe the words of any one as we believed him. You, or if you can not, then our Great Father, the King, must make him come back to us. We can not get along without him!

Captain Montour then spoke for the Senecas:

“Our nation,” he said, “is hard to control. There are many good Senecas, and also many bad ones. But all love Colonel Johnson, all believe what he says, and all, good and bad alike, will listen to his words and have faith in his promises. His tongue is not forked. He always speaks with one tongue. In peace, he was like a fertile field that raised corn and pumpkins and melons. In war, he was like a tree that grew for us to bear fruit, but now seems to be falling down, though it has many roots sunk deep in the soil of our affection, our confidence, and our esteem. His knowledge of our affairs, our laws, and our language made us think he was not like other white men, but an Indian like ourselves. Not only that, but in his house is an Indian woman, and his little children are

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half-breeds, as I also am, your Excellency knows —only I am a French half-breed and Colonel Johnson's little children are English half-breeds. We understand that he declines to return to his office. This makes us afraid you will have to appoint some one in his place who does not know us —some person who is a stranger to us and to our affairs. We therefore ask you to compel him to resume his office of superintendent, or if you can not compel him yourself, to send a letter asking our Great Father, the King, to compel him. We know that he will obey the King. Please tell the King, if you write to him, that we want Colonel Johnson over us, and no one else. He has keen ears and hears a great deal, and what he hears he tells to us truthfully. He also has sharp eyes, and sees a long way ahead, and conceals nothing from us."

After hearing these speeches the Governor adjourned the interview till the next morning at nine o'clock, when he promised the chiefs that he would answer them. The Governor's reason for deferring his reply to the chiefs was that he expected Sir William to reach Albany that evening, and wished to see him before making a definite answer. Johnson arrived about seven o'clock, and the Governor at once called upon him. He was visibly affected when the Governor told him what the chiefs had said, but persisted in his declination to resume office. He finally agreed, how-

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ever, to deal with the Indians in his personal capacity whenever the Governor might consider such services essential to the public welfare. But he declared he would hold no official position calculated to bring him into contact with what he termed "that factious and malignant majority in the Assembly."

The next morning the Governor and Sir William called on the chiefs together, and explained the situation to them. They were partly appeased, and the whole affair was left *in statu quo*. No successor to Sir William was appointed, but, in his personal or unofficial capacity, he continued to supervise the Indian affairs of the colony almost as closely as he had done while in office. Under such conditions the years 1751 and 1752 passed without incident of special note; the French secretly pushing their preparations, the British and Colonial governments resting supinely.

In 1753 the signs of impending war began to multiply. The movements of the French to take actual possession of the Ohio Valley had at last roused the English and Colonial governments to a sense of peril, and they began, rather slowly and clumsily, to take measures for safety. In 1748, at the close of "King George's War," a company had been

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formed in Virginia, of which Lawrence and Augustine Washington were members, called the "Ohio Land Company." This corporation secured a grant of 600,000 acres on the south side of the Ohio River, between the Monongahela and the Great Kanawha. Both the French and Indians held that the King of England had no right to grant lands in that region. The Indians owned the land and the French claimed sovereignty by right of original discovery, exploration, settlement in the shape of trading establishments, and free travel to and fro with consent of the Indians. According to the ethics of those days, these acts constituted a prime basis for the claim of sovereignty.

The English based their counterclaim mainly upon their old treaty with the Iroquois in 1684, at Albany, confirmed in 1710, and reconfirmed at Lancaster, Pa., in 1744. By that treaty the English undertook to defend the domain of the Iroquois, and the latter had claimed jurisdiction over the Ohio Valley and all lands drained by its tributaries, "as far south as the Chilhowee or Great Smoky Mountains." This was purely a claim of rapine! For, while the Iroquois had in earlier days frequently invaded the Ohio country and subdued its aboriginal inhabitants,

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they had never attempted permanently to occupy the territory. Their invasions were, in fact, simply raids, and they had come and gone, leaving wreck and ruin in their tracks, much like the Tartar hordes when they invaded Hindostan, or the Goths, Vandals, and Huns when they overran Europe.

That the Iroquois were and had been for centuries the most powerful Indian nation east of the Mississippi, and had frequently invaded and ravaged the territory of their weaker neighbors on all sides of them, was undeniable; but that mere rapine and ravage should constitute a basis of permanent sovereignty was a theory that only Indian schools of international law would be likely to teach. However, England was willing to accept such a basis for her own claim of sovereignty in the Ohio Valley, and, as the sequel proved, she was willing to fight for it to the death. The fact is, the English statesmen were never serious about this shadowy claim. They laughed at it themselves over their dinner-tables and their Madeira. The real truth was that they had finally made up their minds to oust the French from North America altogether, and one pretext was as good as another.

In the spring of 1752 the Ohio Company

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sent a daring backwoodsman, named Christopher Gist, to explore their grant of land. Gist went as far west as the mouth of the Great Kanawha, and on his return in the autumn made an interesting report. This was the first effort—even pretense—the English had ever made to explore the country they claimed. Event now followed event in quick succession. The Governor of Virginia, Dinwiddie, sent a company of frontiersmen, under Captain Trent, to the head of the Ohio, where they built a small log fort. Captain Trent had forty-one men. In April, 1754, a French and Indian force about 700 strong came down the Allegheny River and invested the little fort. As the French had four pieces of artillery, Captain Trent saw that resistance would be hopeless, and he at once accepted the terms offered by the French commander, Captain Contrecoeur.

The little garrison marched out with the honors of war and Contrecoeur at once proceeded to enlarge the fort, mounted his cannon on its ramparts, and took formal possession of the Ohio Valley in the name of the King of France. Then followed Washington's advance to Great Meadows, and his skirmish with a scouting party of French and Indians under de Jumonville, who was killed with ten

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of his men, and the rest, twenty-two in number, wounded or taken prisoners. Then came the building of "Fort Necessity" and its capitulation a few days afterward to a force of about seven hundred French and Indians under Captain de Villiers. This ended the operations of 1754, and left the French in full control west of the mountains. The "Old French War" was now fairly on. The French had gained the first success; the English were slowly getting ready to fight.

During the period whose events in the Ohio Valley we have thus briefly sketched, affairs in the northern colonies remained in a quiet state until late in the fall of 1753, when alarming rumors reached Sir William Johnson of the presence of numerous French emissaries among the Senecas, and of great discontent on the part of the Western Iroquois generally. Lieutenant-Governor DeLancey was then acting Governor, and he at once requested Sir William to visit the Senecas and do what he could to quiet them. Though it was late in December, and considerable snow was on the ground, Sir William did not shrink from a winter journey on horseback between Mount Johnson and Kanandagea, the principal town of the Senecas. The distance was about 160 miles. There was a fair road



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to Fort Stanwix, and a good bridle-path from there to Onondaga Castle; the rest of the way there was nothing but Indian trails. However, there were comfortable Indian villages along the route, where he was sure to find hearty welcome and the best that the simple hospitality of the Iroquois afforded, which, to a great extent, mitigated the rigors of the journey. On this occasion Sir William took with him only his half-breed orderly, John Abiel, and Nicklaus Brant, who had then just become chief of the Upper Castle Mohawks. The journey was made in seven days; but Sir William stopped one day to visit Hi-o-ka-to in his village at Genesee Falls. He found no French emissaries at Hi-o-ka-to's town, though the chief told him some had appeared there a fortnight before, and he had peremptorily sent them away. "But you will find plenty of them farther west," he said. Hi-o-ka-to then saddled his horse and accompanied Sir William on his journey.

Arriving at the Seneca capital, Sir William was heartily welcomed. The council-house, a commodious log building, having a puncheon floor (split and hewn logs) and a large fireplace, was allotted for his accommodation, with several attendants. A feast was made in his honor, and all the warriors

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present in the town were introduced to him by Hi-o-ka-to. No French emissaries were found, but he was informed that several French traders from Niagara had been there recently. The only Frenchman at Kanandagea, to the great surprise of Sir William, proved to be the redoubtable Captain Joncaire himself, who had arrived two or three days before him. The captain, when he learned that Sir William was in town, made no effort to avoid him, but, in fact, paid him a visit the day after his arrival. He assured Sir William that his presence at the Seneca capital had no political significance, but was merely a visit to old friends. He reminded Sir William that ten years of his boyhood and youth had been passed at this town as a captive, adopted into the tribe, and jocularly remarked that, though he returned to Canada when about twenty years old, he was still a Seneca by adoption, and, as such, was under the jurisdiction of the English Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Iroquois nation! He told Sir William about the visit of Major George Washington to his trading-post at Venango, a month or so previous to this time.

Major Washington was at Venango on his way to Fort LeBoeuf, on a tour of observation for Governor Dinwiddie, during Novem-

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ber of that year, and he also stopped there a couple of days on his return journey. In his journal of that mission, Washington says that Captain Joncaire was very polite and entertained him handsomely. This was the first news Sir William had received of Washington's tour of observation along the Allegheny line of French posts. It was highly important news to him, because it indicated that Virginia had begun to move in earnest with regard to the Ohio question. As Joncaire bore a relation to Indian affairs on the French side in many respects analogous to that borne by Sir William on the English side, their accidental meeting at the Seneca capital in midwinter was an interesting occurrence.

A singular incident of this casual meeting of Sir William Johnson and Captain Joncaire in the Seneca capital was the fact that neither one of them could speak or understand the other's mother tongue. Joncaire had no knowledge of English and Sir William knew nothing of French. Both, however, could speak the Iroquois tongue as fluently as an Indian orator, and it was in that language that they held all their conversations. It is doubtful whether a similar instance ever occurred in the careers of two men as prominent in their respective countries as these two.

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Sir William remained at Kanandagea about a week, and then returned home by easy stages, stopping a day or two at each important village on his route, and, as he expressed it, "thoroughly feeling the pulse of the Senecas, Cayugas, and Onondagas." His conclusion was that the stories about French emissaries had been exaggerated, and that their operations had been confined mainly to the Western Senecas living near Niagara, and on the Tonawanda, or to the southern branch of the tribe in the valleys of Cattaraugus Creek and the Conewango.

The rest of the winter and the spring of 1754 passed without particular incident in the colony of New York. But at the end of June, that year, an event occurred of primary importance. It was the convention at Albany of delegates from the colonies of New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland to form a plan of concerted action in the war which all now saw to be inevitable. There had been meetings of Colonial governors before, but this was the first instance of a convention or congress of delegates chosen for the specific purpose of forming a Colonial Union. Virginia and the Carolinas were not represented except by letters from their gov-

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ernors approving the scheme, and saying that they would cooperate in any program the convention might adopt. "In fact, gentlemen," wrote Governor Dinwiddie of Virginia, "the war is at my back door already, and I have my hands full. I will try to keep my own frontier intact, and that is all I can do. You must take care of the northern frontier." The governors of the Carolinas wrote in a similar vein.

With this Congress met also delegations from the Six Nations, from the Delawares of western Pennsylvania, and the River Indians. The deliberations lasted several days, and the results were a resolution to act together, to recommend that the king appoint Governor Shirley of Massachusetts commander-in-chief of the confederated Colonial forces, and an agreement as to the quotas of men, money, and supplies to be furnished by each colony in their united operations. It was agreed that the eight colonies represented could raise and maintain an effective force of 25,000 men for general operations; that Virginia and the Carolinas should be considered as doing their share if they effectively defended their own frontiers, and furnished contingents for any movement that might be made against the French posts on the Ohio.

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Three commissioners were appointed to go to England and lay the whole situation before the king and his ministers. They were instructed to ask that at least twelve thousand British regulars be sent over at once, and that the fleet on the North American station be increased to a force sufficient to blockade the St. Lawrence and cut off communication between France and Canada.

On the part of the Indians, it was agreed that they should furnish, upon call, a force of at least one thousand picked warriors for general service, provided their commander-in-chief should be Sir William Johnson. And in addition to these, the Indians undertook to raise a force of at least six hundred more to help repel any attempt the French might make against Oswego, or any other salient point within the territory of the Six Nations. The Indians also stipulated that their warriors, when in the field, should receive the same pay, rations, and clothing-allowance as the provincial troops. And that if, upon inspection, the gun of any warrior should be found disabled or unserviceable, he should receive a new one free of cost; also that each warrior, when mustered for actual service, should receive a new blanket, a red flannel shirt, a blue hunting-jacket with red trim-

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ming, and a pair of stout leather or buckskin leggings!

Having settled all these things, the Congress of 1754 at Albany adjourned, subject to recall at any time by Governor Shirley of Massachusetts. That Congress was the embryo of another Congress that met twenty years later at Philadelphia—whose history, has been heard round the world!