

their scalps carried away by the sculking Indians; at last the whole country being laid waste, famine began to rage, and was like to have put a miserable end to that colony."

"If the Indians had understood the method of attacking forts, nothing could have preserved the French from entire destruction at this time." (Colden.)

To form an idea of the power of the Iroquois at this period, we must remember that besides almost destroying the French colony of Canada, three of the Five Nations at the same time carried on war with the Indians of Virginia, and a fourth was fighting the Ottawas, the Illinois and the Miamis on the lakes and in the west. Concerning their numbers, Lahontan says that each nation counted about twelve thousand souls, of whom two thousand were warriors,—total 60,000 souls; 10,000 fighting men.

The war lasted until 1693. The French continued their insane expeditions after the manner of that of M. de Denonville, doing comparatively little damage to the Iroquois, who generally burnt their villages and retired; but keeping Canada in a state of perpetual famine and misery by withdrawing nearly all her able-bodied men from labour, leaving her exposed to the incursions of the Indians, and inflicting the burden of these costly expeditions upon her crippled resources. It was in vain that they resorted to the Indian practice of torturing their prisoners; Count de Frontenac himself ordering the burning alive, with other torments, of an Iroquois chief at Quebec. Warriors taught from their infancy to court the fiery trial as a means of showing their constancy, were not to be intimidated by it. In one expedition against the Onondagas, the only man lost by the latter was an old sachem, "about a hundred years old, who would not retire with the rest, but chose this time to end his days." The French gave him up to their Indians to be tormented. Upon one of them stabbing him several times the old man thanked him, but said—"you had better make me die by fire, that these dogs of Frenchmen may learn how to suffer like men." (Colden.) At one time the Iroquois, finding that the English left nearly all the fighting to them, would have made peace with the French, who had often made overtures to them. But finding that the French governor could not make peace with the English without leave of his master "over the great lake" they refused, notwithstanding the bad faith of their allies, to listen to terms from which the latter were excluded. The English also prevented other attempts at peace. The French, when the Hurons would have made peace with the Iroquois, prevented their doing so by a proceeding of savage barbarity. Thus both these great civilized nations, though differing in everything else, united for a hundred years in doing their best to extinguish all tendency on the part of the Indians to civilization, to foster all the ferocity and cunning of their character, and to eradicate all trace of the noble qualities they had found in it at first.

Nevertheless, at the peace of 1699, "notwithstanding the French commissioners took all the pains possible to carry home the French that were prisoners with the Five Nations, and they had full liberty from the Indians, few of them could be persuaded to return. It may be thought that this was occasioned from the hardships they had endured in their own country, under a tyrannical government and a barren soil. But this certainly was not the only reason, for the English had as much difficulty to persuade the people that had been taken prisoners by the French Indians to leave the Indian manner of living,—though no people enjoy more liberty,—and live in greater plenty than the common inhabitants of New York." (Colden.)

From this date, although joined by the Tuscaroras in 1712, the relative impotence of the Iroquois Confederacy declined. Their numbers, never great, were sadly lessened in fighting our battles with the French. A "Memorial concerning the Fur Trade," addressed to the Governor of New York, in 1725, represents them as being then "ten times less numerous" than when the English gained the country (1665); but this statement must be received with caution. As their numbers lessened, those of the white man increased. But during the years of the decline of their power, the distinctive features of their character were perhaps more admirably displayed than when they still held the balance between two great civilized nations. "The policy and wisdom by which the Iroquois met and resisted the inroads of European power, and prevented the overturning of their institutions, furnishes the highest evidence of their superiority as an active, thinking race of men. . . . No leading event, in fact, in the history of the colonies, has been consummated without the power, in peace or war, of the Iroquois. . . . In any political scheme of the colonies, the cause of the Iroquois, in the question at issue, was ever one of the highest moment, and he must be a careless reader of history who does not perceive how vital an element they became in all the interior transactions between A.D. 1600, at the general period of the settlement of the colonies, and the close of the war of American Independence" (Schoolcraft.)

From the peace of Ryswick to the American Revolution the Iroquois took comparatively little part in the wars between the French and English. Still we find King Hendrich and two hundred Mohawks helping Sir Wm. Johnson to beat Baron Dieskau at Lake George in 1755, where, says Sir Wm., "they fought like lions." They were also present at the fall of Quebec. The above long period (1697-1775) they devoted very much to their own advancement in civilization, and their progress seems to have been very creditable, judging from the description of their country by General Sullivan in 1779. "Instead of a howling wilderness, Sullivan and his troops found the Genesee Falls, and many other districts, resembling much more the orchards, farms and gardens of civilized life." (Stono.) "The town of Genesee contained a hundred and twenty-eight houses, mostly large and very elegant. It was beautifully situated, almost encircled with a clear flat, extending a number of miles, over which extensive fields of corn were waving, together with every kind of vegetable that could be conceived." (Sullivan's Account.)

But they were doomed to be once more thrown back into barbarism by the white man's quarrels. Soon after the breaking out of the revolution, Brant joined the Royalists with nearly all the warriors of the Six Nations. "When I joined the English at the beginning of the war," he subsequently wrote to Sir Evan Nepean, "it was purely on account of my forefathers' engagements with the king. I always looked upon these engagements or covenants between the Indian nations and the king as a sacred thing."

Throughout the war, Brant showed the qualities which had always distinguished his race—courage, sagacity and consummate conduct; ever appearing where least looked for.