

SKETCH OF THE

LIFE OF CAPTAIN JOSEPH BRANT.

(THAYENDANAGEA.)

BY KE-CHE-AH-GAH-ME-QUA.

(Continued.)

In the months of July and August of 1779, Brant again signalized himself by various successful expeditions, destroying villages, and resisting the movements of his pursuers with remarkable skill. With the Iroquois and the Oneidas, Brant had many a brush. In 1780 he descended again into the Mohawk Valley, this time circulating a report that he was about to attack the forts, for the purpose of obtaining stores. This rumor was only a feint to cause the militia to leave the villages, so that they might the more easily fall into the cunning chieftain's hands. The stratagem proved eminently successful. Much property was either taken or destroyed. Women and children were saved and borne into captivity. On one occasion Brant returned an infant one of his "braves" had carried off. With the messenger who bore back this child was a letter addressed to the "Commanding Officer of the Rebel Army," in which the chief avers that, "whatever others might do, he made no war upon women and children."

In the winter of 1780, Brant married his third wife, Catherine, the eldest daughter of the head chief of the Turtle tribe, first in rank of the Mohawk nation.

On the 24th October, 1781, the last engagement of importance connected with the Revolutionary War took place. In this battle the notorious Walter Butler was shot and scalped by an Oneida. Throughout these contests the Indians proved most efficient allies. No one can dispute the bravery of the Mohawk Chief. It may be said of him, as was said of the lamented General Brock:—"His eye was like the eagle's; his motions like arrows from the bow; his enemies fell before him as the trees before the blast of the Great Spirit."

This cruel war being ended—the tomahawk buried—peace proclaimed—Brant and his people, having disposed of their beautiful territory in the United States, applied to the Mississaugas, Ojebways of the River Credit, Upper Canada, for a portion of their lands. The Ojebways, in council, replied:—"Brethren, the whole country is before you; chose you a tract for yourselves, and there build your wigwams, and plant your corn." The Six Nations selected the Grand River tract, which, they said, reminded them of the country they had lost; they offered pay but the Ojebways refused compensation. The Senecas also made an offer of a tract of land to the Mohawks in the valley of the Genesee; but, as Captain Brant long after said in one of his speeches, "the Mohawks were determined to 'sink or swim' with the English;" besides they did not wish to continue in the United States." Notwithstanding the constancy and valor of the Aborigines, especially the Mohawks, during the Revolutionary War, Great Britain, in her treaty of peace, made no stipulation in behalf of her Indian allies; the royal red man was not even

named, while the ancient country of the Six Nations, the residence of their ancestors far beyond their earliest traditions, was included in the boundary granted to the Americans.

In 1785, Brant paid his second and last visit to England. The adjusting of the claims of the Mohawks upon the Crown, and the indemnification of their losses during the war, formed the object of the chieftain's mission. A cordial reception awaited him among his old military associates. Statesmen and scholars sought his society. The Bishop of London, Charles Fox, James Boswell, and other noted characters, showed him marked attention. With the King and Royal Family he was a great favorite. He sat for his picture for Lord Percy, and Fox presented him with a silver snuff-box bearing his initials. On his presentation to His Majesty he proudly refused to kiss his hand, gallantly remarking, "I am a King myself in my own country; I will gladly kiss the Queen's hand." George III. was a man of too much sense not to be gratified with the turning of the compliment in Her Majesty's favor. That the Chief was not an unsuccessful envoy on behalf of his people will appear from the following extract from Lord Sidney's communication, dated Whitehall, 6th of April, 1786. * * * "His Majesty, in consideration of the zealous and hearty exertions of his Indian allies in the support of his cause, and as a proof of his most friendly disposition towards them, has been graciously pleased to consent that the losses already certified by his Superintendent-General shall be made good; that a favorable attention shall be shown to the claims of others who have pursued the same line of conduct." During the visit to England, Brant was the recipient of an elegant large octavo edition of the Gospel of St. Mark. This edition was printed under the patronage of the King, in alternate pages of English and Mohawk, and contained, in addition to the Gospel, the Psalms, occasional prayers, together with the service of communion, baptism, matrimony, and the burial of the dead. It was embellished with engravings; the frontispiece representing the interior of a chapel, with the portraits of the King and Queen, a bishop standing on either hand, and groups of Indians receiving the sacred books from both their Majesties.

Returning to his Canadian home, this celebrated chieftain was unwearied in his disinterested exertions to benefit his people. However desirous Captain Brant may have been for honor or power, he was never mercenary in regard to property. In one of his speeches he declared with all solemnity, that "I have never appropriated a dollar of money belonging to my nation to my own use: nor have I ever charged my nation a dollar for my services or personal expenses." Brant, with his people, supposed the land allotted them was conveyed in fee, by a perfect title; in this they were greatly disappointed. The chieftain used his best efforts to obtain for his people a perfect title, in fee, to their new territory, but all without avail. Council after council, conference after conference, with quires of MS. speeches, attest the sleepless vigilance with which he watched the interests of his tribe, and his ability in asserting and vindicating their rights.

These troubles were a source of perpetual vexation to the old chief to the day of his death. In his last speech on this subject he declared:—"I cannot help remarking that it appears to me that certain characters here who stood behind the counter during the late war, and whom we nothing about, are now dictating to your great men concerning our lands. I should wish to know what property these officious persons left behind them in their own country, or whether, through their loyalty, they ever lost any? I doubt it much. But 'tis well known that scarcely a man amongst us but what sacrificed more or less by leaving their homes. It is well known that personal interest and not public good prompts them." This speech Brant said should be his final effort to obtain justice from the "Great Men."

Brant expressed great anxiety for the thorough education of his two sons, Joseph and Jacob—and, accordingly, sent them to school he had attended in Lebanon. The following extract from a letter addressed to President John Wheelock on this subject is of interest:—"It gives me unspeakable satisfaction to find that my boys are with you. I hope you will show me the kindness to make me, and be particular, in exhorting them to exert themselves, and to behave in a becoming manner. I should wish them taught that it is their duty to be subject to the customs of the place they are in, even with respect to dress and the cutting of their hair."

Brant's people being now in a transition state—neither hunters nor agriculturalists—it formed the object of the Chief to draw them from the chase to cultivate the ground. The sad necessities of war transplanted the Six Nations to a primitive forest. The Mohawk Chief well knew what alone could prove the basis of an industrious community. One of Brant's first stipulations with the Commander-in-Chief was the building of a church, a school house, and a flouring mill.

With great exertion and scanty means, the church was built. This monument of Brant's devotion to the Church of England was erected on the banks of the Grand River, a short distance from where now stands the flourishing town of Brantford. This venerable house of God, now nearly a hundred years old, was the first Protestant church in Canada. These noble red men procured for the old Mohawk Church the first "church-going bell" that ever broke the stillness of a Canadian forest. It is reported that when Brant died, this bell tolled for twenty-four hours! In their loyalty to the British Crown, the Six Nations, although obliged to leave the major part of their possessions behind them in their flight from the States, yet managed to bear with them a few things they held sacred. The curious may be surprised to learn that one of these articles was a large Bible, and the other a complete service of Communion plate, presented to the Mohawks by "the good Queen Ann," when they resided at Fort Hunter. On the Communion service is inscribed, "The Gift of Her Majesty, Ann, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, and of Her Plantations in North America, Queen, to Her Indian Chapel of the Mohawks."

(To be Continued.)