

over his wilderness flock; while the French traders fraternized with the red men, and often mated with dusky beauties. Many French traders, according to Sir William Johnson—a good authority, of whom we shall learn more later—were ‘gentlemen in manners, character, and dress,’ and they treated the natives kindly. At the great centres of trade—Montreal, Three Rivers, and Quebec—the chiefs were royally received with roll of drum and salute of guns. The governor himself—the ‘Big Mountain,’ as they called him—would extend to them a welcoming hand and take part in their feastings and councils. At the inland trading-posts the Indians were given goods for their winter hunts on credit and loaded with presents by the officials. To such an extent did the custom of giving presents prevail that it became a heavy tax on the treasury of France, insignificant, however, compared with the alternative of keeping in the hinterland an armed force. The Indians, too, had fought side by side with the French in many notable engagements. They had aided Montcalm, and had assisted in such triumphs as the defeat of Braddock. They were not only friends of the French; they were sword companions.