

of the custom to an early incident in Virginia history, "for when our wise politicians heard that Rolfe had married Pocahontas, it was deliberated in council whether he had not committed high treason by marrying an Indian princess; and had not some troubles intervened which put a stop to the inquiry, the poor man might have been hanged up for doing the most just, the most natural, the most generous and politic action that ever was done this side of the water. This put an effectual stop to all intermarriages afterwards."

Both French and English were not slow in discovering that among the American tribes the Iroquois were the chief arbiters of savage destiny in North America. The struggle of each rival was to secure the help of these doughty confederates. In the early years of the European occupation, the Dutch propitiated the Iroquois and the French provoked them. The English succeeded to the policy of the Hollanders, and the French long felt the enmity which Champlain had engendered. The Dutch and English could give more and better merchandise for a beaver skin, and this told in the rivalry, not only for the friendship of the Iroquois, but for that of other and more distant tribes. This was a decided gain to the English and as decided a loss to the French, and no one knew it better than the losing party.

Throughout the long struggle, the English never ceased for any long period to keep substantial hold of the Iroquois. There were defections. Some portions of the Oneidas and Mohawks were gained by the Jesuits who settled their neophytes near Montreal. The Senecas were much inclined to be independent, and the French possession of Niagara and the arts of Joncaire helped their uncertainty. Every tribe of the United Council at Onondaga had times of indecision. But, on the whole, the English were conspicuously helped by the Iroquois allegiance, and they early used it to give new force to their claim for a westward extension.