

Previous to the Revolutionary War the Indians were a more civilized and flourishing nation, and they were generally reported to be a more advanced stage of civil society: they had attained some degree of regularity and industry; their Chiefs had great influence, especially those who had a good moral character, and were professedly friends to Christianity.

The late war proved almost fatal to the nation. A great majority took part with the Americans, and lost many of their warriors. A few of them, and some of character and influence, joined the British. In the year 1763, the hostile Indians and refugees drove them from their villages, burning their church, spreading waste and desolation on every side.

For two years they were huddled near Schenectady, and were supplied with rations at the expense of the United States. Individuals would wander, in idleness and dependence, among the Dutch and English towns, except some few, who were sent out on scouting parties, till the cessation of hostilities in 1762 permitted them to return to their former settlements. The devastation of their towns reduced them to absolute want and dependence, and their dispersion among the whites rendered them more than ever, idle, intemperate and abject. When they returned to their desolated villages after the peace, they were wretchedly poor, their land much overgrown, and their reluctance to labour doubled.

To these evils which they suffered from the late war, are to be added the discords and animosity which their different political sentiments and conduct originated. The distinction of Whig and Tory took place, and with it, resentments and dissensions which embitter their intercourse, and embarrass all measures proposed or adopted for their national happiness. Those who have been conversant with them, and interested in their welfare since the Revolution, can re-

alize this, beyond what the pen of a historian can describe.

Aside of that jealousy and credulity which are congenial to the Indian, a foundation was now laid for a permanent division and party spirit among them; and all subsequent negotiations and transactions with them, either by individuals or public bodies, since the peace, by some means or other have cherished this division and party spirit, and even created new ones.

In the year 1784, Congress held a treaty with the Six Nations at Fort Stanwix for settling a general peace and fixing their boundaries. In the meantime, the State of New York had sent a messenger, with an invitation to meet, through all the Five Nations and to Capt. Brant, very expressly to meet the Governor and Commissioners in full Council at Fort Stanwix. Capt. Brant came down with about forty warriors only, composed of Mohawks and emigrants from most of the Five Nations. Not being deputed by the Chiefs or Sachems of the Five Nations, he was not in a capacity for any national treaty. Soon after, the Commissioners from Congress arrived. These different and opposite interests gave birth to another division among the Indians. They were now, Tories, Congress party, and those who adhered to the State of New York. All these, in their turn, must be addressed, courted, or rejected as of no consequence for obtaining the object in view.

In 1785, a treaty was held at the German Flatts by the State of New York, with the Oneidas - judging it necessary to make a purchase of a tract of land on the Susquehannah, and put a total stop and give a final check to any private negotiations by individuals with the Indians on land matters (particularly Col. Harper's partial land purchases) as the state has ever held the preemption right; tho' the most sensible and discerning Indians could never get any clear idea of this right of preemption, as either inherent

in the State, or how conveyed to them. Much pains have been taken by interpreters and others to explain this matter. But either their language is deficient, not sufficiently copious, or the capacity of the Indians not equal to comprehending such a mystery.

Good Peter, an extraordinary character among the Indians, once proposed a discussion of the subject with Judge Benson; but he very prudently declined it, foreseeing that the issue would not accelerate or facilitate the object of the treaty.

There were some very smart, ingenious, and really affecting speeches^{passed} at this treaty between the Governor and Good Peter. Whether they were at all put upon the journals of the treaty I do not know.

In 1786,¹⁷⁸⁷ a number of gentlemen known by the name of Lessees or Lessee Company united to make a large purchase of land of the Five Nations, indeed, to extinguish the whole of their territorial claims excepting certain reservations to each nation respectively, sufficient for their occupancy, and were to pay them by installments or permanent annuity. This they had nearly effected, partly by intrigues and bribes, had not the State refused a confirmation of their grant, and opposed them with the whole legislative authority, and the power of the right of preemption, which was then considered as equal to Magna Charta.

This adventure threw most of the Five Nations into a ferment, and created animosities which were carried to a dreadful length; and it finally produced many evils and occasioned much expense to both the State and the Lessee Company. But the Indians were the greatest sufferers as to their morals and internal peace.

While this was in agitation, Peter Penet, a Frenchman, with some of his associates, began his career of intrigue with the Five Nations and more particularly with the Oneidas. His object was to obtain an agency or superintendency over the Five Nations, and finally to have the direction and manage-

ment of all their landed property. For his assistance, he had brought over Col. Lewis and a certain Nicholas Jordan, a Frenchman, who had been taken prisoner at the reduction of Niagara, and had been adopted into their tribe and married.

Both these persons were artful and intriguing; well acquainted with the French negotiations and treaties; and better tools for Penet's purposes he could not have found in the whole Five Nations. And by this time the divisions, animosities, and jealousies among the Five Nations had become so general that even a straw might inflame them, and put a whole village into consternation in the space of a few hours.

But Penet's art, and address, and dissimulation exceeded any person's I ever knew or heard of, who ever had any connexion with the Indians. By his insinuating manner and almost bewitching speeches he soon gained over and completely secured most of the influential characters among the Oneidas, and, what was most surprising to some of the reflecting Indians, and an instance of his astonishing address, was the ascendancy he had gained over Good Peter and Skenondor. They became his perfect dupes. With these two men, assisted by Lewee and Jordan (tho' of most infamous character) Penet would manage the whole nation, and bring them to adopt any measure he pleased. It was deemed a kind of treachery to suspect the integrity or ability of Penet. By his art and address he had persuaded a majority of the Oneidas, and many throughout the Five Nations, that the French King bore a most tender affection towards his dear children the Indians, and was much concerned for their interest and safety since America had obtained such a conquest over Great Britain, altho' they owed the victory to the ships and arms of the King of France; that he had appointed Penet as their Superintendent, to take charge of their affairs, and keep a good lookout that Congress did not encroach upon their territories; and on condition any such en-

creachment should be made, he was to lift up a switch and shake it against Congress, and if that did not check them, and remind them of their duty to the Indians, the King of France, their old Father, would lift up a curtain and say to Congress: 'Hitherto shall you come, and no farther. Here is the boundary line betwixt you and the Indians, my dear Children!

It was presently proposed to the Oneidas to make out a list of such Articles of French manufactory as they wished, and Penet would send it home to their Father the French King, who would immediately comply with their utmost wishes. An extraordinary list was made out. Had I the documents by me, I would transcribe it as a specimen of a fruitful imagination and the utmost stretch of dissimulation.

A feast was made; pipes and tobacco and a kegg of rum provided; and all was received by the Oneidas with the faith of assurance, Noone seemed to doubt of a fulfillment; while Penet was walking through the camp, sometimes putting on the airs of a sycophant, and sometimes when the turn served, those of a bashaw. I was part of the time a spectator of this curious scene.

Sometime after this, the French Ambassador, Count de Mounsteur, writes a long letter to the Oneidas, to congratulate them on the prospect of the future prosperity of their nation under the auspices our guardianship, and of Penet, whom, in his letter, he stiles 'their Agent General!'

A French priest was also sent up to Oneida, with orders to the Oneidas to build him a house and stockade it, fence in a pasture for his cow, etc. And what was really astonishing to me, as well as to many of the Indians, Good Peter was so headwinked by Penet that he became, for a few weeks, a curate and servant and carrier to this priest; waited upon him every Sabbath morning, carried his images and priestly robes to the church, and then carried them back again, after the service.

Narrative

Had any American or Englishman used the same freedom of speech among the Indians, and propagated the same injurious sentiments against Congress, which Penet had done, and by his agents, for more than two years, he would have been indicted for treason

(From pages 1-3 of an undated manuscript, in Kirkland's hand.

With Letters, undated and fragmentary.)