

**BRODHEAD'S RAID ON THE SENEICAS**

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**Story of the Little Known Expedition in 1779 from  
Fort Pitt to Destroy the Indian Villages  
on the Upper Allegheny.**

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In August, 1779, Gen. Daniel Brodhead, commandant at Fort Pitt, led, by instruction of Gen. Geo. Washington, an expedition from the Forks of the Ohio to the headwater of the Allegheny river to assist in the destruction there of the villages and crops of the Seneca Indians. This was a scheme of military strategy designed by Washington to break the alliance between these Indians and the English. It was completely successful. Brodhead was assisted by simultaneous contributory expeditions of like character one under command of Genl. Sullivan by way of the Susquehannah valley, the other from the Mohawk valley.

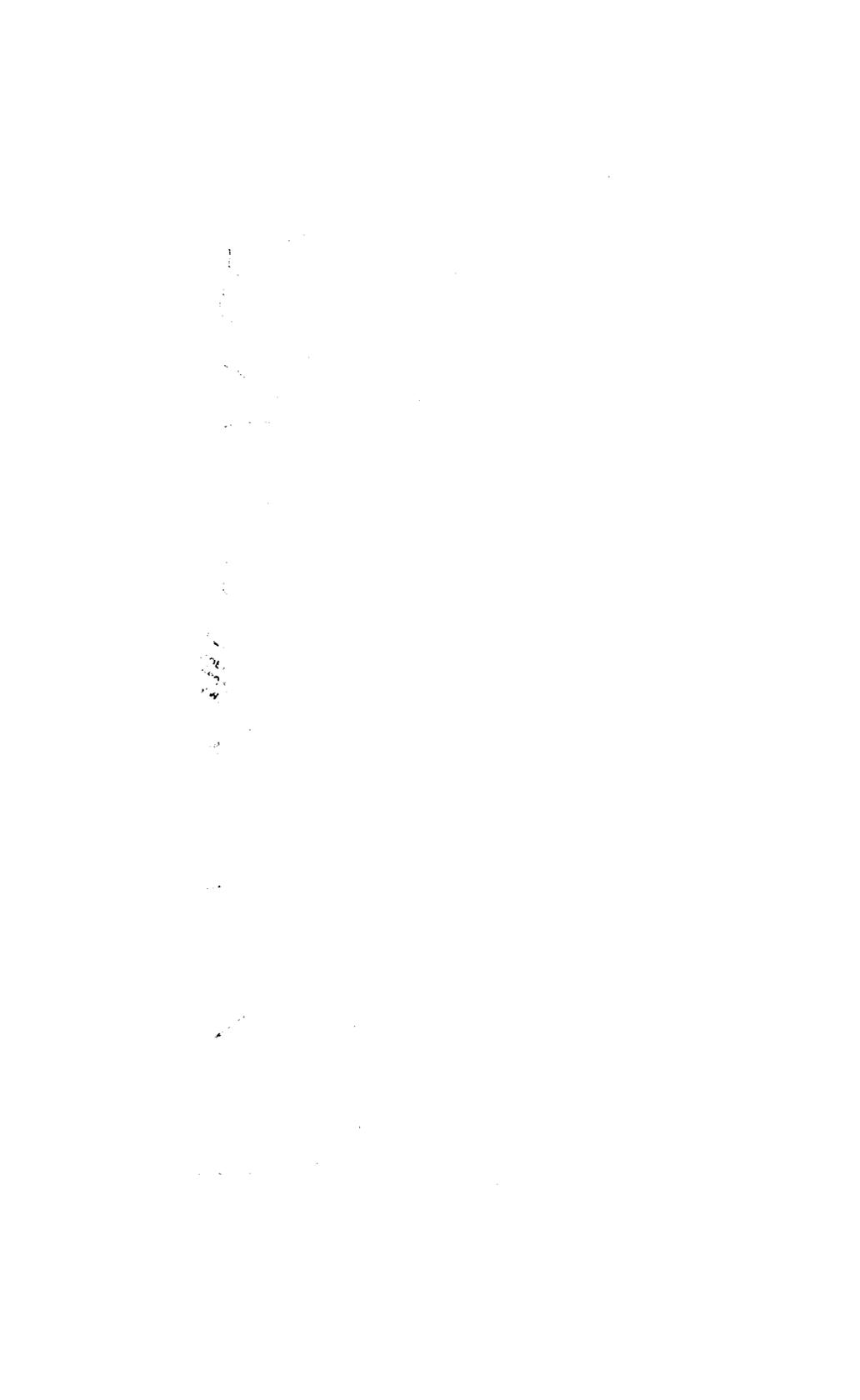
The story of Brodhead's part in the venture was delightfully told in the following paper read on Nov. 27, 1923, by Mr. Stone before the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.

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The Colonial war between England and France, begun in 1745 lasted four years. The treaty of peace settled nothing in the New World and neither party relinquished its claim. Thereupon the French determined to secure a firmer foothold in the region west of the Alleghenies. By virtue of the discovery of the St. Lawrence and the Mississippi, it was their proud claim that the lilies of France should wave over all the territory bordering upon those streams and their tributaries.

In the summer of 1749 Celoron, in command of a detachment of French troops, carried his boats over from Lake Erie to Chautauqua, and following the Conewango to its mouth, thence by the Allegheny down the Ohio to the Miami, and by that stream and the Maumee returned to the great Lakes. At the mouth of the Conewango, and at other points on his route, he buried leaden plates bearing an inscription declaring occupation in the name of the king of France. One of these plates was secured by the Indians, who, mystified by the "devilish writing," carried it to Sir William Johnson, and through him the British government was aroused. Meantime the Pennsylvania traders at Presque Isle, LeBoeuff and Venango, were driven from their posts and at these places French forts were erected.





To check the French invasion the Ohio Company was chartered, of which Lawrence Washington was a shareholder, and it received from the crown a grant of 500,000 acres lying between the Monongahela and the Kanawha. The whole region of the Allegheny river was then claimed by Virginia, and in 1753 the governor of that Commonwealth sent George Washington to the forts on the upper waters of the Allegheny to learn the facts of interest to the English and to protest against the French encroachments. His official report was the culminating cause of the war between the two countries, which was declared in 1756, though already for more than a year there had been open hostilities; Fort Duquesne had been built and Braddock defeated.

In this war the Mohawks were induced to take part with the English; and the Senecas and other tribes of the Six Nations, though inclined to the French, were restrained by their unwillingness to become so involved as to be engaged in battle against their brethren. This, however, did not prevent a desultory guerilla warfare. Thus Cornplanter appears to have been fighting against Washington at the Defeat of Braddock where no kindred tribes were engaged. In after years when the old chief visited the pioneer settlement at Bradford, he was heard to say that no bullet was ever moulded that could kill Washington, for that he had fired twice at him point-blank.

Upon the close of the war in 1763 it is well established that the Seneca chiefs took part in the great Indian uprising under the leadership of Pontiac, who secretly conspired with the French malcontents, who were dissatisfied with the treaty of peace. Thus the Senecas became embittered against the English. Besides, the French forts were their trading posts, and there was hence a community of interest. And so the knife and tomahawk again had their day on the frontier. According to Isaac Moorehead, "The border line of settlements was lighted up with the burning cabins of the people and nearly every household counted its member slain or carried into captivity. In the graphic language of Sidney George Fisher: "There was a sameness about every attack, the stealthy stalking from

tree to tree until the clearing was reached, the creeping from stump to stump, the sudden shot, and then that familiar colonial scene,—the plough standing in the furrow, the horses loose and running, the father on his face with his scalpless skull bleeding into the fresh ground, the mother and children brained and scalped at the door of the cabin, the cabin in flames, and the Indians disappearing in the shadows of the distant woods.”

The Quakers assembly of Pennsylvania abjured war. Benjamin Franklin pleaded for adequate means of defense and took what he could get. Under authority to buy a fire-engine, he bought a cannon and upon an appropriation for wheat “and other grain” he bought powder. He finally organized and led a little army of five hundred and forty men into the Lehigh Valley and built forts in midwinter for the protection of the Moravian settlements.

At length the Scotch-Irish Presbyterian sentiment of eastern Pennsylvania arose in indignation at the Quaker attitude, and the spirit of hatred thus stimulated toward the red men increased in intensity and at length resulted in deplorable excesses. If humanity revolts at the deeds of the tomahawk, its revulsion must be tempered with the memory of the slaughter of the defenseless Conestogas near Harrisburg, and of the family of the great Cayuga Chief, Logan, and with the recorded fact that the Governor of Pennsylvania was finally prevailed upon to add this clause to his proclamation of reward for prisoners and scalps: “And for the scalp of a female fifty pieces of eight.”

It soon became apparent that such retaliatory policy against a savage race was not only unworthy and discreditable but also ineffective. When war was declared against the Mother Country in 1776 the public mind had ripened into accord with the views of Washington that the mode of warfare against the natives must be entirely changed. American soldiers could not cope with them on their own ground by their own tactics. Washington had learned this under Braddock. Nor were the tactics of European armies available; and this also was a lesson of Braddock's defeat.

A cordon of forts had been erected extending from the Delaware to the Susquehanna and then from the Susque-

hanna to the Allegheny. The original seventeen was enlarged to fifty, says Fisher, but the *Pennsylvania Archives* contain a list of eighty-four. These garrisoned stations were almost disregarded by the marauding Senecas. They were emboldened by the defeat of Braddock and the frontier was in a state of terror. Before Braddock's defeat there were at least three thousand men capable of bearing arms in that part of Pennsylvania west of the Susquehanna. Six months later there were scarcely a hundred. The Wyoming massacre was the culmination of the atrocities. The public mind was appalled and demanded action.

Washington on his expedition to Ft. le Boeuf in 1753 had visited the Senecas at their habitations along the Allegheny. He knew that they subsisted in part upon their harvest of corn and also upon their trade in furs, and in the products of handicraft with which their substantial villages were stored. If the crops and villages of the Senecas could be destroyed, the whole region which they infested would become uninhabitable to them, and they would be driven out by their necessities. "Washington had been firmly persuaded," says Marshall, "of the absolute impossibility of defending the immense frontier on the west from Indian incursions by any chain of forts which could be erected; and that the country would be much more certainly protected by offensive than by defensive war. His plan was to penetrate by a rapid movement into the heart of their settlements with a force competent to the destruction of their towns."

The movement contemplated by him was to be an advance by three divisions, one along the Susquehanna, another following the Mohawk, and the third up the Allegheny, and an auxiliary demonstration by way of Lake Champlain to prevent hostile reinforcements from Canada. Congress had a project of its own, but Washington by explanation, argument and appeal finally prevailed. His plan was delayed, and in detail somewhat modified, but at length it was substantially put into execution.

Colonel Daniel Brodhead, whose "brave Pennsylvania riflemen," in the language of De Haass, "cut their way through the ranks of the enemy" at the battle of Long

Island, and who fought under Washington on other battlefields, and who later had been stationed at Sunbury in charge of a frontier two hundred miles long, extending from Wyoming to Allegheny, had been assigned to the command of the Western Department, embracing a territory of unknown extent, including the entire region west of the Allegheny river and mountains and southward to the Gulf of Mexico, and had established his headquarters at Fort Pitt. Washington had written him that he was selected "because of his abilities and his former acquaintance with the back country," and added, "if you quit the post I apprehend there will be no officer left of sufficient weight and ability," but he expressed the wish that Brodhead should keep that opinion to himself.

Obedient to specific orders from General Washington, Colonel Brodhead organized his expedition for the upper Allegheny, and on the eleventh day of August, 1779, at the head of a force of six hundred and five men, rank and file, including men from the eighth regiment, which he had commanded, and recruits from the counties of Westmoreland and Bedford, and from Virginia, he moved up the river with his flotilla of sixty boats, which had been constructed under his direction. Second in command was Colonel John Gibson, who succeeded to the command of the department, and whose nephew became Pennsylvania's distinguished chief justice. Colonel Gibson's successor was Dr. William Irvine, whose grandson and other descendants have been prominent citizens of Warren County.

Partly by water and partly by land, Brodhead's expedition proceeded to Fort Armstrong, situated about a mile below the present town of Kittanning. This fort, pursuant to Washington's suggestion, had been reconstructed under the direction of Colonel Brodhead, who, however, declined to allow it to bear his name, saying in his letter of instructions to Colonel Bayard: "I think it is a compliment due to General Armstrong to call that fort after him." The expedition moved on. The enemy lurked in their hiding places, although only a few days had passed since Captain Samuel Brady, a noted Indian fighter, had encountered a small party of Senecas up the river, and destroyed them,

excepting their chief, Cornplanter, who swam the stream and so escaped.

On the eve of the departure of the expedition, Brodhead had determined if possible, to communicate his plans to General Sullivan commanding the expedition advancing up the Susquehanna, so that the latter might advantageously make his movements in conformity therewith. But who should carry the message? If it had been a "message to Garcia," the bearer might have laughed to take it. But it was a different task to travel three hundred miles through a rugged and unknown wilderness across the warpaths of the Senecas. The two soldiers who took the letter and returned with Sullivan's answer are unknown. Their names are unrecorded. They are not catalogued with the heroes of history. But they will live, perchance, in its pages to fascinate the imagination and stir the heroism of generations to come.

At the mouth of the Mahoning the little army disembarked and was organized into a pack-train. Leaving the river, which here turns to the northwest and makes a great bend, at the extremity of which Fort Venango was situated, the line of march cut off the bend and, crossing the Red Bank and the Clarion, proceeded by a known Indian path directly northward to strike the river at the mouth of the Tionesta. Approaching the river the advance guard discovered a party of Senecas, who presently ran their canoes ashore, and a hot skirmish took place, in which the Indians were put to flight. The village, or collection of villages, at the mouth of the Tionesta, was called in the official report Cushcushing. It appears as Goshgoshonk on the map accompanying the account of this expedition, contributed by Obed Edson to the *Magazine of American History*. but it should not be confused with a contemporaneous village of the same name situated in Butler County on the route over which Brodhead returned.

Crossing the Allegheny, the expedition proceeded up the west bank to an Indian town called Buckaloons, just below the mouth of the Casyonding or Brokenstraw Creek, near the present village of Irvineton. The natives fled to the hills. A breastwork was thrown up, and some vestage

of this fortification remains on the west side of the highway from Irvineton to Warren. Leaving a garrison here, the main force proceeded to Conawago, otherwise known as Penawakee, a Seneca town on the site now occupied by Warren. It was deserted; had been uninhabited for some months. A force was dispatched up the Conawago river and found there none but deserted villages. Farther up, the Allegheny was a comparatively unknown region.

The troops were reluctant to proceed into the wilderness, but Brodhead discovered an Indian path which led to the hills on the west bank, gave the order to march, and this path was followed for about twenty miles until, on a high bluff overlooking the valley above the present village of Kinzus, there burst into view the Indian village marked for destruction; and along the sparkling waters of the Allegheny were outspread broad fields of luxuriant corn. Indian corn! Boon and heritage of a vanishing race to the new America, whose pretty golden grains Columbus bore to the queen of Spain as jewels of untold worth! Corn of the Nundawaono! Staff of life to the Pilgrim Fathers, the scepter today of an agricultural empire whose people boast that a year's corn harvest will more than pay the running expenses of the national government!

The expedition had been well-timed to reach the region before the gathering of the crop. The warriors were gone. The great Seneca chiefs, whose home was here, Cornplanter, Farmers Brother and Blacksnake, were massing their forces in front of Sullivan and Clinton for the crucial battle at Newton, now Elmira.

Finer corn Brodhead declared he had never seen. More than five hundred acres of it was cut and piled and burned. The villages, consisting of substantial log houses, were set in flames, including the principal village situated on the east side of the river within the former boundaries of McKean County. This village is indicated on the Edson map, and its site was afterwards known, according to William King, as the "Burnt Houses," and by him regarded as within the borders of the present county of McKean. In fact, this entire Indian settlement on both sides of the river in Pennsylvania was within the county of McKean until 1840

when the boundary was changed between the counties of Warren and McKean.

The work of destruction required the labor of the whole force for three whole days. Three thousand dollars worth of plunder was carried away to be sold for the benefit of the troops.

In his report to Washington, Gen. Brodhead says eight towns were destroyed, including one hundred and thirty houses; and yet in his letter to General Sullivan he mentioned Youghroonwago, which is just below the state line, as the uppermost town, and as being distant only forty miles from Jennesseo; that he would have effected a junction with Sullivan there if his soldiers had not been barefoot. But there were not more than eight Indian towns between the mouth of the Kinzua and Olean Point, according to the Edson map or any other accessible data; and, accordingly, if they were all destroyed, the expedition, or at least a detachment of it, must have advanced beyond Youghroonwago to Olean. Edson's map marks the route beyond as far as Bucktooth, and Mary Jamison in her narrative says that Brodhead ascended to Olean Point. There was little to distinguish these towns in the memory of the commander, but there was a circumstance which impressed upon his mind the name of one of them, Youghroonwago—and it was the only one mentioned by him in either of his reports—and that was the finding there of the painted image or war post clothed in dog skin.

The villages were so alike that the importance of correctly naming the last one destroyed could not have been apparent. That it was not Youghroonwago is evident, from Brodhead's estimate of the distance to Jennesseo. For by the course of the river to Olean and thence to Jennesseo, it would be nearly eighty miles, instead of forty. If the expedition, either in whole or in part, ascended to Olean, destroying all the river villages, as Mary Jamison declared, it must have put to the torch her own village of Tuneungwan, and this is confirmed by Proctor, who camped there in 1791, and found the ruins of huts formed on regular streets. The creek at whose confluence this village was situated was doubtless ascended and explored.

Brodhead had undertaken to destroy the Indian towns of the upper Allegheny and its tributaries, and he accordingly sent a detachment up the Conewango. It is not credible that he should have turned back while there were any villages remaining either on the principal stream or its chief tributaries. Marshall, who had access to authentic data says: "Every lake, river and creek in the country of the Seneca Nation was traced for villages, and no vestige of human industry was permitted to remain. Houses, cornfields, gardens and fruit trees shared one common fate, and Sullivan strictly executed the severe but necessary orders he had received," (duplicated, doubtless, to Brodhead) "to render the country completely uninhabitable for the present, and thus by want of food to compel the hostile Indians to remove to a greater distance."

There is another noteworthy circumstance. When Colonel Porter, who had been dispatched by Washington to solicit Cornplanter's intercession with the western Indians, had advanced a short distance beyond Dunewangwa, he turned back and proceeded to Cornplanter's "upper town," which he found situated on the north side of the river at the estimated distance of one hundred and thirty miles above the mouth of French Creek. The official measurement from Olean to the mouth of French creek is 132 miles. Hence the "upper town" must have been at or not very far westward from the present town of Olean. And the Indian name of the "upper town" was Tenachshegouchtongee, meaning the burnt house.

If Brodhead ascended to Olean, is it probable that he returned through the ashes of the Indian towns around the Bucktooth bend? Or did he follow a well-worn Indian mountain path through Marshburg to the river near the mouth of Sugar Run, subsequently adopted as a public highway, and so cut off the upper river bend as he did the lower one? There is at least a trail and a tradition. There is a tradition that George Washington indicated this highway. I live beside it, but what the overhanging trees are whispering I cannot literally reveal. "Your roads", said Peter Wilson, a Cayuga chief, at a meeting of the New York Historical Society in 1847, "your roads still traverse the

same lines of communication which bound one part of the Long House to the other."

Washington was a surveyor with an eye trained to distances and courses. His expedition in 1753 gave him data and information. He would have naturally noted critically the route followed by Celeron, who passed down the river only four years earlier, striking the Allegheny at Conewago. He would have learned something of the course of the upper Allegheny, and that Conewago and Olean were natural terminals of routes by path and stream. He would have learned it from Scaroodaya and Monacatootha, the Seneca chiefs with whom he made friends, who were with him at Braddock's defeat. Brodhead himself would have learned it from Zeisberger, the Moravian missionary, who came down the river from the mouth of the Oswayo and preached to the Indians at Cushcushing (Tionesta) between 1767 and 1770, with whom Brodhead was in correspondence, and from whom he subsequently obtained a guide for a western expedition.

Washington had written:—"Engage as many warriors as you can and at all events procure good guides who know the way." That there should be an Indian path directly from Jennesadaga, Corplanter's "lower town", to Tenachshegouchtongee, his "upper town," was demonstrated by the course of the river, and by the further fact that Proctor found no path along the river west of Dunewangwa. The destruction of the records at Washington during the war of 1812 warrants a resort to strong inferences. The knowledge Washington gained was put into charts and reports. These, or so much as he deemed requisite, he made available to Brodhead. Nothing unknown can be more certain.

Brodhead himself in his report makes no mention of his route in return until it reaches Conewago. He simply says: "On my return I preferred the Venango road"; and then he describes the destruction of the Indian towns along his course to Venango and up French creek, and incidentally mentions the existance of petroleum, or Seneca oil, that his soldiers found it an efficient cure for rheumatism. But for the natives it had nobler uses. It not only lent brilliancy to their war paint, but it also played its part in their religi-

ous rites. Montcalm, encamped one night fifteen leagues below Warren, witnessed a weird and startling spectacle when the river suddenly burst into flames, and he interpreted the demonstrations of the natives as an example of fire worship.

Brodhead reached Pittsburgh on the fourth of September without the loss of man or beast, having been absent twenty-four days. He commended his soldiers to the commander-in-chief for "perseverance and zeal scarcely equalled in history," saying that "though many of them returned barefoot and naked, they disdained to complain." In recognition of his services he received not only the thanks of Congress, but this commendation from the commander-in-chief in general orders from his headquarters to the army at West Point: "The activity, perseverance and firmness which marked the conduct of Colonel Brodhead and that of all the officers and men of every description in this expedition do then great honor, and their services entitled them to the thanks and to this testimonial of the general's acknowledgment." Is it not remarkable that no current history of Pennsylvania devotes more than five lines to this important expedition?

General Brodhead was Deputy Surveyor-General under the Provincial Government, and occupied a seat in the Provincial Convention of 1775, and later in the General Assembly. His second wife was the widow of Governor Mifflin. His accomplished nephew, who became the official historian of the state of New York, has not made known his uncle's valor and virtues, but the kindred and neighbors of the veteran patriot have erected a monument in his honor in the town of Milford, Pike County, Pennsylvania, where he spent his declining years and died at the age of seventy-three.

He was a true soldier and held his officers and men close to his ideals of soldierly conduct. He was stern and rigid in discipline, but fair and just to his subordinates. His orderly book is deposited in the vaults of the Pennsylvania Historical Society. He affixed his handsome signature, without tremor, to the sentence of an undutiful soldier to "ride the wooden horse for ten minutes with a musket

ried to each of his feet." He was sometimes in controversy with Lochry or Gibson or Campbell, but his complaints do not appear to have been groundless.

He indulged in sarcasm towards his predecessor and quoted with satisfaction another General's reference to the "very romantic building called Fort McIntosh, built by the hands of hundreds who would rather have fought than wrought." When the inhabitants encroached with their fences upon the garrison ground at Fort Pitt, he wrote to Pickering:—"The inhabitants on this side of the Allegheny hills profess a great law knowledge; and it would be exceedingly disagreeable to me to be pestered with their silly courts, and therefore the service will suffer until the pleasure of Congress is known respecting it."

He corresponded with many of the distinguished men of the Revolution. He wrote Jefferson that if his expedition should be successful, it would "establish the tranquility of our frontier for years to come." His letters to Washington, Jefferson and Pickering, to President Reed and General Greene mark him as a man of administrative capacity, military skill and practical statesmanship. He negotiated important treaties with the Wyandot and Shawanese tribes, and upon the adoption of the constitution held for eleven years the office of surveyor-general of the state of Pennsylvania.

The story of this bloodless and destructive expedition against the Seneca Indians of the Allegheny valley at a critical junction of the Revolution, and of its untold consequences, cannot be spoken without linking three great figures as its triumvirate, Washington, Brodhead and Cornplanter. Washington, because the expedition was born of his military genius which determined the method from his experience, calculated its course with precision and foresaw its results, immediate in the relief of the settlers and ultimately as a factor in the war of the Revolution. Who shall say that the war would have ended at Yorktown if the British government had not seen the strong arm of its Indian alliance stricken down?

Sullivan's expedition had destroyed the Seneca villages of the Genesee valley, 165,000 bushels of corn and extensive

orchards of apples, pears, peaches and plums, one of which contained fifteen hundred trees. The whole Seneca people were homeless and helpless; no Indian summer came, and winter was upon them. They had only one recourse for sustenance, and that was to the English. They gathered accordingly in the vicinity of Fort Niagara. It was a winter of almost unexampled severity, during which the tribe suffered and contracted disease and died in great numbers.

The haughty Seneca Nation was in the act of dying. The more dependant upon the English it became, the weaker grew the inter-tribal relation. The great confederacy of the Iroquois had received its death-blow. Its last council fire was covered in 1777. It was never rekindled. When, at length, the English concluded the treaty of peace without provision for their Indian allies, they felt that they had been betrayed. They, at least, were not bound by it. No treaty had been made with them.

Red Jacket and Brant were ready to revolt and urged their followers to join the uprising of the western Indians. The English held the forts on the American side of the lakes for ten years after peace was declared and secretly fomented the insurrection. It was the design of the projected Indian confederacy to restrict the occupation of the United States to the territory east of the Allegheny mountains. But Cornplanter, the most distinguished warrior, the noblest Roman of them all, the most far-seeing as well as the most influential, resisted the movement. He saw that the English power was broken, and that the future of his tribe depended upon the friendship of the government and people of the United States, and that the tomahawk and knife must be put away forever for the pruning hook and the plough.

So he, almost single-handed, held in leash the angry Senecas until General Wayne, Pennsylvania's favorite son of the Revolution, Wayne, of Stony Point and Monmouth, Wayne, who dying in the block house at Presque Isle, said: "Bury me at the foot of the flagstaff, boys!" achieving a decisive victory at the battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794, put an end to the insurrection. The importance of this victory is not exaggerated by Governor Pennypacker when

he declares: "It secured for civilization the territory between the Ohio and the Mississippi rivers." Whose would have been the victory if the enemy had been reinforced by a thousand Seneca warriors? It was followed almost immediately, as Professor Matthews has recently noted, by the immigration of settlers from the east into the county of McKean and ten other countries of northern and western Pennsylvania.

Meantime, the chiefs of the Six Nations, yielding to the powerful influence of Cornplanter, had acceded to the treaties of Fort Stanwix and Fort Harmer. The status of the Indian as a child of the republic was fixed, and the great chief, with one sightless eye and one maimed hand, strode back to his chosen home beside the river, grim and silent, to enjoy with dignity for the remainder of his days the respect of all who knew him. The smile that no one ever saw must have leaped to the eye that shone when he touched the hand of Washington and knew that the Great White Father leaned on him for support.

It is said that in his last days Cornplanter destroyed the relics which were the gifts of Washington and Mifflin, and the French trophies of his valor. What a pathetic scene, could it have been witnessed, when this lonely warrior, venerable with a hundred years, took down the sword of Washington in the silence of his hut and reverently broke it in twain! Did he feel that the peace he had pleaded for had not brought to his race the enlightenment that he coveted, that his people did not share his spirit, that they had not responded to his efforts, and that they were being submerged by a civilization in which they were powerless to rise?

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