CHAPTER XV.

French Policy and Intrigues continued—The Mountain Barriers of Upper Carolina the key to the Province—Cherokee's account of the first appearance among them of French Emissaries—Francis Nicholson—The English strangely indifferent to the dangerous encroachments of the French—The wonders and extent of the Great Valley, little apprehended by the settlers on the Atlantic—Gov. Nicholson meets the Cherokees in Council, &c.

The incidents of the last chapter, though interesting and truthful pictures of the times, and of their faithful chronicler, led us considerably in advance of the regular order of events.

The French, still bent on their grand scheme of uniting their possessions on the Gulph of Mexico, with those of Canada on the north, erected, in rapid succession, after the completion of Fort Toulouse, Fort Tombeckbe among the Choctaws, Fort Assumption on the Chickasaw Bluff, and Paducah at the mouth of the Cumberland River, besides numerous trading houses along the Tennessee, in close proximity to the Cherokees and Catawbas; the former occupying a position in the midst of their mountain barriers, on the immediate border of Carolina, which had long been regarded as the key to that province. The French knew this, quite as well as the public

guardians of the people, who were most interested, and were now ready to take the last step—the seduction to their alliance and amity of the Cherokees, preliminary to the successful invasion and ultimate ruin of Carolina.

We found in the manuscript records the account given by the Cherokees themselves, of the first adventure made by the French among them in prosecution of these plans. They pushed a boat, loaded with goods and presents, as high up the Tennessee as they could approach in that manner the Over-hill settlements; and going boldly into one of the towns, proposed to hold a conference with the head-men. The Indians appeared to assent; the chiefs were assembled, and a scaffold erected, no doubt at the request of the French, in accordance with their notions of public dignity. On this the head-men and their new visitors took their seats with great solemnity, and entered upon the business that had brought the latter into the Nation.

All, in a short time, seemed greatly interested in the animated French talk, when suddenly the indignant warriors springing up, drew their tomahawks, and cut them all off with their friendly Indian interpreters; after which they threw their dead bodies from the scaffold and dragged them into the river. This account was preserved by a conjurer, who appears to have been an eye-witness of the scene. It is further related that this rebuff so discouraged the French, that for many years, they made no more at-

tempts to entice the Cherokees from their alliance and commerce with the English.

In 1721, Francis Nicholson was appointed Governor of South Carolina. He was the first chief magistrate under the royal government ; and though all parties were now in the enjoyment of a delightful calm, after the fierce political struggle that had just freed the province from the hateful rule of the proprietors, it does not appear that either the new Governor or the Assembly had any adequate conception of the policy of the French, or of the dangers that threatened Carolina, from their splendid schemes of self aggrandizement.

Indeed, it is an interesting fact, that even at this period of American history, the whole of that vast region now known as the West, had made no definite impression upon the minds of the English inhabiting the Atlantic coast. To them it was an unknown world, shut alike to their view and their enterprise, by the impassable barrier of the Alleghany Range. It is true, that much earlier than this, a few bold spirits, allured by the profits of trade, or in search of new hunting-grounds and wild adventure, had found here and there a pathway which led to advanced points, from which they enjoyed magnificent views of the wonders of the Great Valley. But, like the ancient Northmen—whom we are told fortuitous winds wafted to the shores of the New World, long before its discovery by Columbus—the many strange stories they brought back of the scenes

they had witnessed in their distant excursions, only served to fill the imaginations of the people with vague ideas of a mysterious region that lay far beyond the blue mountain summits that studded their western horizon.

"They little dreamed of the breadth, the length, and the resources of the Great Valley, whose verge they had approached; nor imagined that a region lay beyond them, wrapped in the silent splendor of unbroken forests, which, in extent and beauty, far exceeded the territories which had previously been subdued by our ancestors, at so great an expenditure of life and wealth. They were, perhaps, unaware, that the French were even then building forts and villages, planting the grape, and playing the violin, upon the borders of the Mississippi."*

We are not left, however, to mere conjecture on this point. An old chronicler of the times, thus quaintly writes: "We have very little or no correspondence with the mountainous parts of this province, and towards the country of the *Messiasippi*, all which we have strange accounts of, and some very large ones, with respect to the different and noble fruits, and several ornaments and blessings of nature, which Messiasippi possesses; more to be coveted than any of those we enjoy to the eastward of the mountains. Yet, when I come to discourse some of the idolizers of that country, I found it to be rather novelty than truth and reality, to induce those persons to allow it

* Judge James Hall.

such excellencies above others. It may be a brave and fertile country, as I believe it is; but I cannot be persuaded that it can be near so advantageous as ours, which is much better situated for trade, being faced all along with the ocean, as the English America is, when the other is only a direct river, in the midst of a wild, unknown land, greatest part of whose products must be fetched or brought a great way, before it can come to a market. Moreover, such great rivers commonly allow of more princes' territories than one, and thus nothing but war and contention accompanies the inhabitants thereof."*

The Colony, relieved from the agitations of its recent domestic troubles, and once more restored to quiet, under the mild sway of the royal government, had ample leisure to make provision for its commercial prosperity and security against the hostile encroachments of neighboring savages. With this end in view, Gov. Nicholson, soon after his arrival in the province, proposed to form with the warlike Cherokees a treaty of close friendship and amity.

He accordingly dispatched a messenger to the Nation, informing them of his desire to meet them in a general council, on the border, that he might distribute presents amongst them, and confer with their chiefs on the interests and claims of their growing commerce with the English. The Cherokees, pleased and flattered by a proposal so conciliatory and re-

---

* John Lawson's History of Carolina, published in London, at the Black-Boy, Paternoster Row, 1718.

spectful from their white neighbors, readily accepted the invitation; and the head-men of thirty-seven of their towns, came down with a great company of warriors, and women, and children, and met Gov. Nicholson. This council was held, it is quite probable, at the Congarees; just three years before this event, as has been related, the fort and trading-house had been built at that place; it was then the only advanced or fortified post on the Cherokee border. Ninety-six was not settled till about thirty years after, and Old Fort Prince George had not been dreamed of. The Cherokee Nation numbered in population, at this period, more than twenty thousand, and could send into the field more than six thousand bowmen.

It indeed behooved the colony of Carolina to cultivate the friendship of a people so truly formidable, and so well situated for harassing her, and, when directed by French emissaries, for effecting her total ruin. Well would it have been, if all her public agents and private citizens had constantly manifested towards these savage but generous warriors, the same respectful and kindly tone shown on this occasion by Gov. Nicholson. It would have been happier for the people on the sea-board, infinitely happier for the hardy pioneers and their defenceless families of the upper-country, whose blood, in after years, flowed in streams, to appease the wild spirit of revenge, which was at length aroused by the cruelty, oppression and neglect of English traders, and English government officials.

There is no chapter in our history which more strikingly illustrates the evil consequences that are sure to flow from the continued disregard of the great Scriptural truth—"With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again"—than that which details the public and private dealings of Carolina with the Cherokee Indians, and the consequent retribution that in due time followed, when the frontiers were lit up with a flame of savage warfare, and the tomahawk and scalping-knife were doing their terrible work around the hearth-stones of the Scotch-Irish backwoodsmen.

The difference between the French and English, in their manner of treating the Indians, was just the measure of the specific difference in the social habits of the two people. The one was ever characterized by the mildness, suavity, and respectful consideration, so striking in the Frenchman, whether he is studied in Paris, or in his rude village on the Illinois; the other, by that selfish bluntness, and utter disregard for the feelings of others, not unfrequently pushed to the degree of brutality, equally inherent in the Englishman.

It may be replied by some that, after all, French suavity is only an exhibition of intense selfishness, under the form of a refined policy; but what is all the suavity and politeness of social life, but a refined policy, except that rare manifestation of it which springs from the heaven-born benevolence of true piety. It is pleasing to any man, be he Christian or savage, to be thought worthy of even that deference

in the conduct of others, which yields only the semblance of true feeling. And that this much is an acceptable work, and does not fail of its earthly reward, is shown in the remarkable fact, that the French were enabled to penetrate into the very heart of the continent, and there form peaceful and flourishing settlements; when the English, with all their courage and dogged hardihood, had scarcely advanced a hundred miles towards the interior, from their first strong-holds on the Atlantic coast. During one hundred years, large communities of the French settled in the Mississippi Valley, planted their gardens, reared fruits, and embellished their cheerful homesteads—in the midst of vast savage hordes—with scarcely an instance of hostile interruption from those wild children of the wood, only confiding and gentle, when treated with kindness and respect.

Governor Nicholson, we are told, although recently from Europe, was not unacquainted with the character and habits of the Indians. Indeed, his conduct in this congress, with the Cherokees, and another, which he soon after held with the warlike Creeks—whose eastern boundary was the Savannah River—sufficiently indicated his estimation of their prowess, and their capacity for an alliance of friendship and amity with their civilized neighbors.

This first assemblage in council with the English, of the head-men and warriors of the Nation, was, without doubt, more striking and imposing than any that were afterwards held at Old Ninety-six, Ne-

quossee, or at the same place—if the Congarees was really the spot—at which this was convened. There was scarcely a town or a village in all their settlements that was not represented; and the proud chiefs and warriors, and young females of the Cherokee Nation of that period, dressed in the wild, picturesque costume of their race, presented the finest specimens of the physical man and woman, to be found on the American Continent.

"The Cherokees," observes Bartram, "are yet taller and more robust than the Muscogees, and by far the largest race of men I have seen. Their countenance and actions exhibit an air of magnanimity, superiority and independence. The women are tall, slender, erect, and of a delicate frame; their features formed with perfect symmetry, and they move with a becoming grace and dignity. The complexion of some of them is so bright as to approximate quite closely to the bloom of European women."

The botanist saw the Cherokees at the period of the Revolution—when it was already the testimony of history that they differed as much in their moral and physical characteristics from what they had been in the time of Governor Nicholson, as the Greeks under Alexander differed from the Greeks who fought at Marathon and Salamis.

No minute record,* it appears, was ever made of

* It was not until Governor Glen's time, that any regular, and, at the same time, full records were kept of the public transactions with the Indians. It is to his intelligence, liberality and praiseworthy re-

the proceedings and incidents of this council, on the remote border; the name of but one, even, of the many head-men who took a part in it has been preserved; yet their speeches on the topics laid before them by the Governor, must have afforded examples of wild eloquence worthy of preservation and study.

The business in hand was soon dispatched, and the promised presents distributed; after which the Governor smoked, with the chiefs, the pipe of peace. He, on this occasion, regulated their weights and measures, and marked out the boundaries of their lands, that they might no more be intruded upon by English settlers. The Cherokees had made frequent complaints of encroachments upon their hunting-grounds. An agent was appointed to superintend their affairs; and, in order to have them united, as far as their notions of government would permit, under a common head, he selected and empowered, with their consent, Wrosetasato, to be the chief warrior, and commander of the Cherokees, endowing him, at the same time, with ample authority to punish the guilty and lawless, and to obtain redress for every act of oppression perpetrated by English settlers or traders, upon the Indians.* The Cherokees returned to their towns, from this congress, greatly pleased, both with their presents, and with

---

gard for system, that the State is indebted for those invaluable manuscript records in the Secretary of State's office, known as the Indian Books. They are contained in four volumes, and are themselves a deeply interesting and curious history.

* Hewit, Car. Col.

the excellent temper and good sense displayed by the Governor; and the tranquillity, as well as the rapid political developments of the twenty-two years immediately following, fully vindicated the wisdom that conciliated, on that occasion, the friendship and good-will of this formidable people.

The interval that elapsed between 1721 and 1743, were, without doubt, the most prosperous years of the peltry trade, and the most peaceful in the relations of Carolina and the Cherokee Nation; yet it is just that period in their mutual history, of which we have been furnished the fewest records. Some were lost in the subsequent turmoils and vicissitudes of the colony; some, perhaps, through neglect, were destroyed by the canker and damp; but much more, that would have been interesting and valuable, was either suffered to pass away unrecorded by any chronicler,* or lies locked up and useless in the British archives.

It was in 1716, as we have seen, that the first caravan or periago† of goods was sent up by the Board to the Cherokees; and, as late as 1731, there were collected from all quarters in Charleston, for exportation, as many as two hundred and twenty-five thousand deer-skins alone. And the annual rate of exportation was above two hundred thousand.‡

* Professor Rivers, in his Topics of Carolina History, gives a minute account of the sources of our history, and the condition of the manuscript records in the State archives.

† This is sometimes written pettiauger; periago is the word used in the journals.

‡ Professor Rivers's Topics of History.

It cannot, of course, be precisely ascertained how many of these peltries were contributed from the hunting-grounds of the Nation; but we found a single brief note in one of the Indian Books which enables us to venture something more than a mere conjecture as to the actual number. Nearly a quarter of a century later, 1755, it is stated, that Cornelius Dougherty anticipated, if the winter of that year was but tolerably favorable for hunting, collecting from his district alone in the Nation, fourteen thousand pounds of buck-skin leather. His trading-house stood in the town of Tugaloo. Three years before, the entire Nation had been mapped off into thirteen hunting-ranges or districts, and a trader appointed to every one, to superintend its traffic and business. If for one of these ranges only two-thirds of Dougherty's expected crop be taken as an average return, it would give for the entire Cherokee country an annual production of more than one hundred thousand pounds of buck-skin leather; no mention being made of the skins of the raccoon, the beaver and bear; all of which animals were still quite abundant in the upper-country and the mountains.

It was estimated in old times, and is still, that the average weight of deer-skins is four pounds to the skin; and there is little difference between its weight when dry and raw, and when taken from the vat ready for transportation. In the winter of 1755, therefore, Dougherty expected the hunters of Tugaloo range to bring down with their rifles some thirty-five hundred deer; making for the whole Nation,

according to our average, about twenty-five thousand annually.

This is, doubtless, far below the true number—four pounds being a large average per skin—larger, it would appear, from the following note taken from the same records, than that allowed in the practical estimates of 1716. The enacted price of deer-skins for this period were—for *white skins* of a pound weight and upwards, five shillings; *light*, two shillings and six-pence; raw buck-skins, of a pound and a half weight and upwards, five shillings; all raw, doe, and other light skins, two shillings and six-pence, or according to weight.

Tugaloo, early and late, was an important place in the peltry trade; it is frequently mentioned in the journals of the Board. June the 11th, 1717, it is recorded, that the Commissioners received from Tugaloo, nine hundred and one dressed deer-skins, fifty-six raw, thirty beaver-skins, and twenty-one slaves, purchased at that factory.

In 1755, one hundred deer-skins were worth, in Charleston, at the present value of the English pound in federal currency, two hundred and fifty dollars. A beaver-skin brought four shillings, three and one-half-pence. During the administration of Governor Glen, after the staple of rice, which had then grown to be of the first importance on the list of colonial exports, there was no commodity that surpassed in value the peltries yielded by the Indian hunting-grounds. An old chronicler quaintly informs us of the extent and value of the traffic in its earlier periods:

"They carry on a great trade with the Indians, from whom they get these great quantities of deer-skins, and those of other wild beasts, in exchange for which they give them only lead, powder, coarse cloth, red paint, iron-ware, and some other goods, by which they have a very considerable profit."

In 1747, there were exported from Charleston two hundred pounds weight of beaver-skins, and seven hundred and twenty hogsheads of deer-skins; worth, in Carolina currency, nearly four hundred thousand pounds. The latter commanded five hundred and fifty pounds per hogshead.

If such was the importance of the peltry trade in the last years of its existence, when wild animals had become comparatively scarce, and the degeneracy and indolence of the Indians a by-word and reproach, no reason is left for amazement at the assertion, that in the periods of its greatest prosperity it was the most lucrative business on the Continent. The wonder must be, how it was possible for the hapless animals, whose skins supplied this active commerce for the greater part of the eighteenth century, to continue to subsist so long in such incredible numbers.

It is a fact, not unworthy of notice in natural history, that long after most of the beasts of prey had become well-nigh extinct in the country, the gentle deer and inoffensive beaver were still numerous in their primitive haunts; though, during more than a century, they had been the constant objects of the toil and cunning of a nation of the best hunters in the

world, and had supplied, through their destruction, the greater part of that time, the most valuable portion of the colony's exports. Do not the meek, even among brute animals, inherit the earth?

It was once remarked by an old hunter, when speaking of the deer, "that the reason why they were not all cut off when young—as they breed but once a year, and were always surrounded by other animals which preyed upon them, as dogs, wolves, wild-cats and panthers—was, that no dog or other animal could smell the track of a doe or fawn while the latter was too young to take care of itself. He declared, that he had often seen it demonstrated; he had often taken his dogs over the ground where he had just before seen them pass, and they would take no notice of the track, and could not be induced to follow when led to the spot, while they would instantly discover the track of any deer not having young ones." This is but another proof from nature of the wisdom and goodness of God.

Great as were, however, the profits of the peltry trade, they began seriously to fall off so soon as the evil effects of the English policy, in its management, had time to develop themselves. The irregularities and abuses produced by the licentiousness and rapacity of a few bad men engaged in the traffic, no doubt, did it an injury—sometimes even endangering the peace of the province—but so far as they immediately affected the character of the Indians, they had a decided tendency to sharpen their wits, stimulate their energies, and increase their self-reliance, while

just the opposite influence was brought to bear upon them by the government monopoly, through its fostering care and protection.

They were now taught to rely, in all their exigencies, upon the strong arm of the colony, instead of upon themselves, and their private traders, whom they had formerly met on terms of mutual freedom and independence. The whole affair had become a State concern, and neither trader nor Indian was any more free. The former, who, before only abused the Indians, now learned to cheat the government, and abated not one whit of his evil practices in the Nation.

But the blameworthy policy of the government did not stop at this; from a sad misconception of the Indian character—in which even Gov. Glen, with all his tact and ability, participated—they adopted the method of conciliating the savages by frequent large distributions of presents to their women and head warriors. No small portion of the revenue accruing from the Indian trade was thus expended.

A few years were sufficient to develop the evil tendencies and fruits of such a system. The Indian character degenerated with most alarming rapidity; its original manliness was soon greatly abated; the self-reliant energy, courage, and noble bearing, that, in primitive times, had distinguished the Cherokees as the most intelligent and formidable warriors in America, were exchanged for the indolence and empty, noisy parade of a nation of doomed, proud beggars.

A reliable eye-witness observes: "Before the Indian trade was ruined by our left-handed policy, and the natives corrupted by the liberality of our dim-sighted politicians, the Cherokees were frank, sincere and industrious. Their towns then abounded in hogs, poultry, and everything sufficient for the support of a reasonable life, which the traders purchased at an easy rate, to their mutual satisfaction; and as they kept them busily employed, and did not make themselves too cheap, the Indians bore them good will and respect—and such is the temper of all the red natives."*

In the early years of the traffic, as before remarked, the traders established their store-houses wherever they found a town or settlement favorably situated for their business. The commissioners decreed, however, about the year 1718, after forts and factories had been built, both at Savannah Town and the Congarees, that the Indians, for the future, should come down to those posts to obtain their goods and do their trading; "it being the resolution and sense of the whole country, not to have, any more, a settled store among the Indians, but, by degrees, cause them to come down to our forts, and purchase what they want."†

This arrangement would have been productive of a two-fold good effect: it would have withdrawn from the Nation the swarm of roving, unprincipled white leeches, who preyed upon both traders and Indians, and whose vicious example corrupted all

* Adair. † Commissioners' Journals.

who came within their reach; and have brought, as well, the Indians repeatedly, every year, under the influence of a better sort of men—whom it must have been the interest of the government to appoint as its agents at those factories.

An unaccountable whim, however, or a deep-seated prejudice of the Cherokees to coming to the forts for purposes of traffic, as well as the uncontrollable enterprise of the traders—great numbers of whom soon began to be licensed—effectually prevented this salutary measure.

The manuscripts add: "The Cherokees utterly dislike coming down to the garrisons to deal, and will not, on any account—except to procure *rum*—agree to that proposal." It is not at all improbable that the Indians were potently aided in contracting this prejudice to the trade at the forts, by the horde of white savages, who infested their towns; for the proposed arrangement was obviously fatal to their nefarious enterprises and licentious dalliance in the Nation.

The full blaze of day would have produced no greater commotion among as many skulking bats, than the removal of the scenes of their exploits to places where the eyes of upright men, and some portion of civilized influence, could reach them.

The fate of the Nation was now sealed. Long before the breaking out of the war of 1760, the Cherokees had become so thoroughly corrupt, as to be no longer able—as in the times of their primitive strength—to resist the insinuating address

and tempting bribes of the French emissaries, who, well aware of their opportunity, had been, for years, hard at work, in their own dangerous way, in every part of the Nation. We are in advance, however, of some events too interesting and important to be omitted.