kings, and bearing the products of their subjects from still remoter regions, and he would perchance have pictured at his feet a splendid city, reproducing the tall gables of Rouen and the elegant facades of Paris, its streets gay with the vivacious language of France, its cross-capped churches sheltering only the stately ceremonies of Rome.

But a far different destiny was in store for our county, due partly to the chances of war, and partly to the subtle characteristics of race, which make of the Gaul a good explorer but a bad colonizer, while the Anglo-Saxon is ever ready to identify himself with the land to which he may roam.

CHAPTER VI.

FRENCH DOMINION.

A Slight Ascendency -- De Nonville's Assault — Origin of Fort Niagara — La Hontan's Expedition — The Peace of Ryswick — Queen Anne's War — The Iroquois Neutral — The Tuscaroras — Joncaire — Fort Niagara Rebuilt — French Power Increasing — Successive Wars — The Line of Posts — The Final Struggle — The Expedition of D'Aubrey — The Result — The Surrender of Canada.

FOR the next forty-five years after the adventures of La Salle, the French maintained a general but not very substantial ascendency in this region. Their voyagers traded and their missionaries labored here, and their soldiers sometimes made incursions, but they had no permanent fortress this side of Fort Frontenac (Kingston) and they were constantly in danger from their enemies, the Hedonosaunee. Yet the French sovereigns and ministers considered the whole lake region, including the territory of Erie county, as being unquestionably a part of "New France" (or Canada.) Their maps so described it, and they looked forward with entire assurance to the time when French troops and French colonists should hold undisputed possession of all that vast domain.

In 1687, the Marquis de Nonville, governor of New France, arrived at Irondequoit bay, a few miles east of Rochester, with nearly two thousand Frenchmen and some five hundred Indian allies, and marched at once against the Seneca villages, situated as has been stated in the vicinity of Victor and Avon. The Senecas attacked him on his way, and were defeated, as well they might be, considering that the largest estimate gives them but eight hundred warriors, the rest of the confederates not having arrived.

The Senecas burned their villages and fled to the Cayugas. De Nonville destroyed their stores of corn and retired, after going through the form of taking possession of the country. The supplies thus destroyed were immediately replenished by the other confederates, and the French accomplished little except still further to enrage the Iroquois. The Senecas, however, determined to seek a home less accessible from the waters of Lake Ontario, and accordingly located their principal village at Geneva, and on the Genesee above Avon.

De Nonville then sailed to the mouth of the Niagara, where he erected a small fort on the east side of the river. This was the origin of Fort Niagara, one of the most celebrated strongholds in America, which, though for a time abandoned, was afterwards during more than half a century considered the key of Western New York, and of the whole upper-lake country.

From the new fortress De Nonville sent the Baron La Hontan, with a small detachment of French, to escort the Indian allies to their western homes. They made the necessary portage around the Falls, rowed up the Niagara to Buffalo, and thence coasted along the northern shore of the lake in their canoes. All along the river they were closely watched by the enraged Iroquois, but were too strong and too vigilant to be attacked.

Ere long the governor returned to Montreal, leaving a small garrison at Fort Niagara. These suffered so severely from sickness that the fort was soon abandoned, and it does not appear to have been again occupied for nearly forty years.

In fact, at this period the fortunes of France in North America were brought very low. The Iroquois ravaged a part of the island of Montreal, compelled the abandonment of Forts Frontenac and Niagara, and alone proved almost sufficient to overthrow the French dominion in Canada.

The English revolution of 1688, by which James II., was driven from the throne, was speedily followed by open war with France. In 1689, the Count de Frontenac, the same energetic old peer who had encouraged La Salle in his brilliant discoveries, and whose name was for a while borne by Lake Ontario, was sent out as governor of New France. This vigorous but cruel leader partially retrieved the desperate condition of the French colony. He, too, invaded the Iroquois, but accomplished no more than DeNonville.

The war continued with varying fortunes until 1697, the Five Nations being all that while the friends of the English, and most of the time engaged in active hostilities against the French. Their authority over the whole west bank of the Niagara, and far up the south side of Lake Erie, was unbroken, save when a detachment of French troops was actually marching along the shore.

At the treaty of Ryswick in 1697, while the ownership of other lands was definitely conceded to France and England respectively, that of Western New York was left undecided. The English claimed sovereignty over all the lands of the Five Nations, the French with equal energy asserted the authority of King Louis, while the Hedonosaunee themselves, whenever they heard of the controversy, repudiated alike the pretensions of Yonnondio and Corlear, as they denominated the governors respectively of Canada and New York.

So far as Erie county was concerned, they could base their claim on the good old plea that they had killed all its previous occupants, and as neither the English nor French had succeeded in killing the Iroquois, the title of the latter still held good. In legal language they were "in possession," and "adverse possession" at that.

Scarcely had the echoes of battle died away after the peace of Ryswick, when, in 1702, the rival nations plunged into the long conflict known as "Queen Anne's War." But by this time the Iroquois had grown wiser, and prudently maintained their neutrality, commanding the respect of both French and English. The former were wary of again provoking the powerful confederates, and the government of the colony of New York was very willing that the Five Nations should remain neutral, as they thus furnished a shield against French and Indian attacks for the whole frontier of the colony.

But, meanwhile, through all the western country the French extended their influence. Detroit was founded in 1701. Other posts were established far and wide. Notwithstanding their alliance with the Hurons and other foes of the Iroquois, and notwithstanding the enmity aroused by the invasions of Champlain, DeNonville and Frontenac, such was the subtle skill of the French that they rapidly acquired a strong influence among the western tribes of the confederacy, especially the Senecas. Even the powerful socio-political system of the Hedonosaunee weakened under the influence of European intrigue, and while the Eastern Iroquois, though preserving their neutrality, were friendly to the English, the Senecas, and perhaps the Cayugas, were almost ready to take up arms for the French.

About 1712, an important event occurred in the history of the Hedonosaunee. The Five Nations became the Six Nations. The Tuscaroras, a powerful tribe of North Carolina, had become involved in a war with the whites, originating as usual in a dispute about land. The colonists being aided by several other tribes, the Tuscaroras were soon defeated, many of them were killed, and many others were captured and sold as slaves. The greater part of the remainder fled northward to the Iroquois, who immediately adopted them as one of the tribes of the confederacy, assigning them a seat near the Oneidas. The readiness of those haughty warriors to extend the valuable shelter of the Long House over

a band of fleeing exiles is probably due to the fact that the latter had been the allies of the Iroquois against other Southern Indians, which would also account for the eagerness of the latter to join the whites in the overthrow of the Tuscaroras.

Not long after this, one Chabert Joncaire, a Frenchman who had been captured in youth by the Senecas, who had been adopted into their tribe and had married a Seneca wife, but who had been released at the treaty of peace, was employed by the French authorities to promote their influence among the Iroquois. Pleading his claims as an adopted child of the nation, he was allowed by the Seneca chiefs to build a cabin on the site of Lewiston, which soon became a center of French influence.

All the efforts of the English were impotent either to dislodge him or to obtain a similar privilege for any of their own people. "Joncaire is a child of the nation," was the sole reply vouchsafed to every complaint. Though Fort Niagara was for the time abandoned, and no regular fort was built at Lewiston, yet Joncaire's trading-post embraced a considerable group of cabins, and at least a part of the time a detachment of French soldiers was stationed there. Thus the active Gauls kept up communications with their posts in the West, and maintained at least a slight ascendency over the territory which is the subject of this history.

About 1725, they began rebuilding Fort Niagara, on the site where De Nonville had erected his fortress. They did so without opposition, though it seems strange that they could so easily have allayed the jealousy of the Six Nations. It may be presumed, however, that the very fact of the French being such poor colonizers worked to their advantage in establishing a certain kind of influence among the Indians.

Few of the Gallic adventurers being desirous of engaging in agriculture, they made little effort to obtain land, while the English were constantly arousing the jealousy of the natives by obtaining enormous grants from some of the chiefs, often doubtless by very dubious methods. Moreover, the French have always possessed a peculiar facility for assimilating with savage and half-civilized races, and thus gaining an influence over them.

Whatever the cause, the power of the French constantly increased among the Senecas. Fort Niagara was their stronghold, and Erie county with the rest of Western New York was, for over thirty years, to a very great extent under their control. The influence of Joncaire was maintained and increased by his sons, Chabert and Clauzonne Joncaire, all through the second quarter of the eighteenth century.

In the war between England and France, begun in 1744 and closed by the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, the Six Nations generally maintained their neutrality, though the Mohawks gave some aid to the English. During the eight years of nominal peace which succeeded that

treaty, both the French and English made numerous efforts to extend their dominion beyond their frontier settlements, the former with more success. To Niagara, Detroit and other posts they added Presque Isle, (now Erie,) Venango, and finally Fort Duquesne on the site of Pittsburg; designing to establish a line of forts from the lakes to the Ohio, and thence down that river to the Mississippi.

Frequent detachments of troops passed through along this line. Their course was up the Niagara to Buffalo, thence either by bateaux up the lake, or on foot along the shore, to Erie, and thence to Venango and Duquesne. Gaily dressed French officers sped backward and forward, attended by the fierce warriors of their allied tribes, and not unfrequently by the Senecas. Dark-gowned Jesuits hastened to and fro, everywhere receiving the respect of the red men, even when their creed was rejected, and using all their art to magnify the power of both Rome and France.

It is possible that the whole Iroquois confederacy would have been induced to become active partisans of the French, had it not been for one man, the skillful English superintendent of Indian affairs, soon to be known as Sir William Johnson. He, having in 1734 been sent to America as the agent of his uncle, a great landholder in the valley of the Mohawk, had gained almost unbounded influence over the Mohawks by integrity in dealing and native shrewdness, combined with a certain coarseness of nature which readily affiliated with them. He had made his power felt throughout the whole confederacy, and had been intrusted by the British government with the management of its relations with the Six Nations.

In 1756, after two years of open hostilities in America, and several important conflicts, war was again declared between England and France, being their last great struggle for supremacy in the New World. The ferment in the wilderness grew more earnest. More frequently sped the gay officers and soldiers of King Louis from Quebec, and Frontenac, and Niagara, now in bateaux, now on foot, along the western border of our county; staying perchance to hold a council with the Seneca sachems, then hurrying forward to strengthen the feeble line of posts on which so much depended. In this war the Mohawks were persuaded by Sir William Johnson to take the field in favor of the English. But the Senecas were friendly to the French, and were only restrained from taking up arms for them by unwillingness to fight against their Iroquois brethren, farther east.

At first the French were everywhere victorious. Braddock, almost at the gates of Fort Duquesne, was slain, and his army cut in pieces, by a force utterly contemptible in comparison with his own. Montcalm captured Oswego. The French lines up the lakes and across to the Ohio were stronger than ever.

But in 1758, William Pitt entered the councils of George II. as actual though not nominal chief of the ministry, and then England flung herself

in deadly earnest into the contest. That year Fort Duquesne was captured by an English and Provincial army, its garrison having retreated. Northward, Fort Frontenac was seized by Colonel Bradstreet, and other victories prepared the way for the grand success in 1759. The cordon was broken, but Fort Niagara still held out for France; still the messengers ran backward and forward, to and from Presque Isle and Venango; still the Senecas strongly declared their friendship for Yonnondio and Yonnondio's royal master.

In 1759 yet heavier blows were struck. Wolfe assailed Quebec, the strongest of all the French strongholds. Almost at the same time General Prideaux, with two thousand British and Provincials, accompanied by Sir William Johnson with one thousand of his faithful Iroquois, sailed up Lake Ontario and laid siege to Fort Niagara. Defended by only six hundred men, its capture was certain unless relief could be obtained.

Its commander was not idle. Once again along the Niagara, and up Lake Erie, and away through the forest, sped his lithe, red-skinned messengers to summon the sons and the allies of France. D'Aubrey, at Venango, heard the call and responded with his most zealous endeavors. Gathering all the troops he could from far and near, stripping bare with desperate energy the little French posts of the West, and mustering every red man he could persuade to follow his banners, he set forth to relieve Niagara.

Thus it was that about the 20th of July, 1759, while the English army was still camped around the walls of Quebec, while Wolfe and Montcalm were approaching that common grave to which the path of glory was so soon to lead them, a stirring scene took place on the western borders of our county. The largest European force which had yet been seen in this region at any one time came coasting down the lake from Presque Isle, past the mouth of the Cattaraugus, and along the shores of Brant and Evans and Hamburg, to the mouth of the limpid Buffalo. Fifty or sixty bateaux bore near a thousand Frenchmen on their mission of relief, while a long line of canoes were freighted with four hundred of the dusky warriors of the West.

A motley yet gallant band it was which then hastened along our shores, on the desperate service of sustaining the failing fortunes of France. Gay young officers from the court of the Grand Monarque sat side by side with sunburned trappers, whose feet had trodden every mountain and prairie from the St. Lawrence to the Mississippi. Veterans who had won laurels under the marshals of France were comrades of those who knew no other foe than the Iroquois and the Delawares.

One boat was filled with soldiers trained to obey with unquestioning fidelity every word of their leaders; another contained only wild savages, who scarce acknowledged any other law than their own fierce will. Here flashed swords and bayonets and brave attire, there appeared the dark

rifles and buckskin garments of the hardy hunters, while, still further on, the tomahawks and scalping-knives and naked bodies of Ottawa and Huron braves glistened in the July sun.

There were some, too, among the younger men, who might fairly have taken their places in either bateau or canoe; whose features bore unmistakable evidence of the commingling of diverse races; who might perchance have justly claimed kindred with barons and chevaliers then resplendent in the *salons* of Paris, but who had drawn their infant nourishment from the breasts of dusky mothers, as they rested from hoeing corn on the banks of the Ohio.

History has preserved but a slight record of this last struggle of the French for dominion in these regions, but it has rescued from oblivion the names of D'Aubrey, the commander, and DeLignery, his second; of Marin, the leader of the Indians; and of the captains DeVilliers, Repentini, Martini and Basonc.

They were by no means despondent. The command contained many of the same men, both white and red, who had slaughtered the unlucky battalions of Braddock only two years before, and they might well hope that some similar turn of fortune would yet give them another victory over the foes of France.

The Seneca warriors, snuffing the battle from their homes on the Genesee and beyond, were roaming restlessly through Erie and Niagara counties, and along the shores of the river, uncertain how to act, more friendly to the French than the English, and yet unwilling to engage in conflict with their brethren of the Six Nations.

Hardly pausing to communicate with these doubtful friends, D'Aubrey led his flotilla past the pleasant groves whose place is now occupied by a great commercial emporium, hurried by the tall bluff now crowned by the battlements of Fort Porter, dashed down the rapids, swept on in his eager course untroubled by the piers of any International bridge, startled the deer from their lairs on the banks of Grand Island, and only halted on reaching the shores of Navy Island.

He being then beyond the borders of Erie county, we can give the remainder of his expedition but the briefest mention. After staying at Navy Island a day or two to communicate with the fort, he passed over to the mainland and confidently marched forward to battle. But Sir William Johnson, who had succeeded to the command on the death of Prideaux, was not the kind of man likely to meet the fate of Braddock.

Apprised of the approach of the French, he retained men enough before the fort to prevent an outbreak of the garrison, and stationed the rest in an advantageous position on the east side of the Niagara, just below the whirlpool. After a battle an hour long the French were utterly routed, several hundred being slain on the field, and a large part of the remainder being captured, including the wounded D'Aubrey.

On the receipt of these disastrous news the garrison at once surrendered. The control of the Niagara river, which had been in the hands of the French for over a hundred years, passed into those of the English. For a little while the French held possession of their fort at Schlosser, and even repulsed an English force sent against it. Becoming satisfied, however, that they could not withstand their powerful foe, they determined to destroy their two armed vessels, laden with military stores. They accordingly took them into an arm of the river, separating Buckhorn from Grand Island, at the very northwesternmost limit of Erie county, burned them to the water's edge, and sunk the hulls. The remains of these hulls, nearly covered with mud and sand, are still, or were lately, to be seen in the shallow water where they sank, and the name of "Burnt Ship Bay" perpetuates the naval sacrifice of the defeated Gauls.

Soon the life-bought victory of Wolfe gave Quebec to the triumphant Britons. Still the French clung to their colonies with desperate but failing grasp, and it was not until September, 1760, that the Marquis de Vaudreuil, the Governor-General of Canada, surrendered Montreal, and with it Detroit, Venango, and all the other posts within his jurisdiction. This surrender was ratified by the treaty of peace between England and France in February, 1763, which ceded Canada to the former power.

The struggle was over. The English Octavius had defeated the Gallic Antony. Forever destroyed was the prospect of a French peasantry inhabiting the plains of Erie county; of baronial castles crowning its vine-clad heights; of a gay French city overlooking the mighty lake and the renowned river.

CHAPTER VII.

ENGLISH DOMINION.

Pontiac's League — The Senecas Hostile — The Devil's Hole — Battle near Buffalo — Treaty at Niagara — Bradstreet's Expedition — Israel Putnam — Lake Commerce — Wreck of the Beaver — Tryon County — The Revolution — Four Iroquois Tribes Hostile — The Oswego Treaty — Scalps — Brant — Guienguahtoh — Wyoming — Cherry Valley — Sullivan's Expedition — Senecas Settle in Erie County — Gilbert Family — Peace.

NOTWITHSTANDING the disappearance of the French soldiers, the western tribes still remembered them with affection, and were still disposed to wage war upon the English. The celebrated Pontiac united nearly all these tribes in a league against the red-coats, immediately after the advent of the latter, and as no such confederation had been formed against the French, during all their long years of possession, his action must be assigned to some cause other than mere hatred of all civilized intruders.