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LIFE

OF

TE-HO-RA-GWA-NE-GEN,

ALIAS

THOMAS WILLIAMS,

A

CHIEF OF THE CAUGHNAWAGA TRIBE OF
INDIANS IN CANADA.

BY THE

REV. ELEAZER WILLIAMS,

Reputed son of Thomas Williams, and by many believed to be Louis XVII,
son of the last reigning monarch of France previous
to the Revolution of 1789.

ALBANY, N. Y.:

J. MUNSELL, 78 STATE STREET.

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INTRODUCTION.



In the summer of 1852, the undersigned, while preparing for publication a History of St. Lawrence and Franklin counties, N. Y., applied to the Rev. Eleazer Williams, who was residing upon the Indian Reservation of St. Regis, for such facts as he might be able to furnish concerning the history of these people and of his own family, who were known to be descendants of a captive daughter of the Rev. John Williams of Deerfield.

A few weeks after, this gentleman sent, with other papers, a manuscript narrative of the life of Thomas Williams, with full permission to make such use of them as might be deemed proper; but expressing a wish that, if published, the language should be slightly amended, and grammatical errors corrected, as the papers had been hastily prepared and time had not been found to give them the necessary revision for the public eye.

Believing that this permission justified the present use of these papers, the undersigned has copied them with the sole view of correcting the slight irregularities in the style, or the “In-

dian idioms ” as the author termed them, which they contained ; but in so doing has preserved the original meaning in all cases, and has neither added, omitted or corrected, except in the way of notes.

The strange romance that has been woven into the history of Eleazer Williams, and the numerous corroborating circumstances which have been adduced to sustain the theory that he is the son of Louis XVI, render every thing connected with the parentage, education and life of this person worthy of the attention of the unprejudiced seeker after truth. It is not certain that these pages will add any

thing to what has been previously written concerning him, further than as they indicate the character of the man under whose protection he was reared to manhood, and the circumstances in which his early habits and associations were formed.

To the inhabitants of the section in which Mr. Williams resided, the story of his noble birth was received with very general distrust; and with but few exceptions, it was regarded as an artful invention of some ingenious dealer in romance. This fact can not be received as evidence in the case, since but few, if any, who knew him personally, could claim acquaintance in

his early youth. At the time of his alleged introduction into the family of Thomas Williams, the whole of Northern New York was an unbroken wilderness, and there is not probably a single person living in the county where Mr. Williams resided, who has had any personal knowledge of it earlier than the beginning of this century. Any opinion they may have formed concerning the personal history of Eleazer Williams must therefore have been derived from secondary and uncertain authority, and should be received with suitable allowance for the errors it might possibly involve.

Aside from the principle of human

nature which inclines us to undervalue the fame that may attach to those with whom we are personally acquainted, and which is so forcibly implied in the statement of scripture, that "a prophet is not without honor, save in his own country," another cause existed, which may have had its influence in determining the local opinion with regard to the reality of the reputed identity.

While we would touch lightly upon the faults of the dead, and would fain allow the grave to close over whatever of error in education or habit there may have been in the living, it can not be denied that many persons who have

formed and expressed opinions upon personal acquaintance with the subject of these remarks, in the locality where he resided, had at some period of their lives sustained the relation of *creditors*. How far this circumstance might bias opinion, is left to the decision of the mental philosopher; to what extent this trait, if admitted in the full degree, and conceded as hereditary, would disfavor the theory of descent from the Bourbon family, is referred to the historian for *settlement*.

The acquaintance of the editor of these pages with Mr. Williams, continued from the time above mentioned to a few months previous to his death,

which occurred at Hogansburgh, N. Y., on the 28th August, 1858. The impression made during this intercourse was, that he possessed a kind and generous heart, an unusually large fund of general information concerning American history, and the character of prominent individuals who have figured in public life, a retentive memory of events during and subsequent to the last war with Great Britain, an acute perception of motive and character in those with whom he was brought in contact, and a desire for public notoriety. It was evident that he dwelt upon the romantic story with pleasure, and that allusions to the subject,

with complimentary appellations of royalty, were received with satisfaction.

However the story of his titled ancestry, suffering, and sequestration, may have originated, it is believed no person intimately acquainted with Mr. Williams will deny, that he possessed an ingenious faculty for collating the plausible coincidences which make up the warp and woof of the narrative, and that few who heard from his own lips the various incidents which tended to confirm the theory, could withstand the conviction that the whole chain of evidence *was extremely like truth.*

It is a fact of public notoriety,

in the locality where he lived, that Mr. Williams was regarded with distrust and apprehension by those who professed the religion of his father, and that efforts have been uniformly made, in speaking of him, to disparage the pretensions which have been set up in his behalf.

His influence with the St. Regis Indians was chiefly limited to the Protestant portion, who form a very small minority; and, for this cause, few opportunities occurred in that place for the exercise of the functions of a clergyman among the people with whom he had been associated the greater part of his life.

For a few years before his death he resided at Hogansburgh, mostly alone, near the edge of a grove, in a neat cottage erected by friends subsequent to the publications which excited so general an interest in 1853. His habits of domestic economy were such as might, under the circumstances, be alike expected in one reared as a prince or a savage; and his household presented an aspect of cheerless desolation, without a mitigating ray of comfort, or a genial spark of homelight. His neatly finished rooms had neither carpets, curtains nor furniture, save a scanty supply of broken chairs and invalid tables; boxes filled with

books, the gift of friends, lay stowed away in corners ; his dining table, unmoved from week to week, and covered with the broken remains of former repasts, and his pantry and sleeping room disordered and filthy, left upon the visitor an oppressive feeling of homeless solitude that it was impossible to efface from the memory.

FRANKLIN B. HOUGH.

ALBANY, May 10, 1859.

TEHORAGWANEGEN.

Thomas Williams, alias *Tehoragwanegen*, an Iroquois chief warrior, was born about 1758 or 9, and was the third in descent from the Rev. John Williams of Deerfield, Mass., who, with his family and several parishioners, was captured by a party of three hundred French and Indians, on the night of February 28, 1704.*

* History fixes the date of this attack as the night of Feb. 29, by upwards of 340 Indians, under Major Hertel de Rouville.

A part of the assailants broke into the house of Mr. Williams, who, as he was awakened from sleep, snatched his pistol and presented it to the breast of the first Indian that approached; but it missed fire. The savages seized and bound him. Two of his children, and a negro woman of his family, were taken to the door and murdered, and his wife (the only daughter of the Rev. Eleazer Mather of Northampton), and all his children, except his eldest son, were, with himself, compelled immediately to begin their march towards Canada.

In wading a small river, on the second day, Mrs. W., who had scarcely

recovered from a late confinement, fell down, and was soon after dispatched with a hatchet by one of the Abenakis or St. François tribe. At length, after witnessing the most agonizing scenes, during a journey of three hundred miles, they arrived in Canada. Upon his return, he was unable to bring one of his daughters (Eunice) with him. She became assimilated with the Indians, and afterwards, by instigation of some of the Jesuits, married a young chief by the name of De Roguers, by whom she had three children, Catharine, Mary and John.

Mary was the mother of Thomas ; she dying when he was fifteen months

old, his aunt Catharine took charge of the orphan child, by whom she was ever regarded as his mother. Being born and reared among the Indians, he of course imbibed the Indian habits, customs and manners. He was a sprightly and active boy, and was early instructed in the faith and dogmas of the Romish church. His affectionate aunt reared him with the greatest tenderness. Although married to a noted chief (X. Rice), she had no heir, and he therefore had no competitor in the family circle, and was treated by his foster parents as their only child.

In 1772, the Rev. Levi Frisbie was

sent as a missionary into Canada, by the Rev. Dr. Wheelock of Dartmouth College, and visited Caughnawaga, where he took particular notice of Thomas, with whose descent and family connection in New England he was familiar. After much negotiation, he finally obtained the consent of his adopted parents to take him to Hanover, and place him in the Moore Charity School, connected with the college above named. In the fulfillment of his instructions Mr. Frisbie proceeded to visit the Indians at the Lake of Two Mountains, and during his absence Thomas was attacked with the small-pox, which prevented his accom-

panying him on his return ; an occurrence greatly regretted by the youth.

This adopted father was skilled in the chase, and by following him on his journeys the youth became very fond of the forest, and of watching its wild inhabitants. Their hunting grounds were near Crown Point, Lake George, and in the vicinity of Fort Edward. After his marriage he was often absent from his village, from one to two or three years, living upon the best that the forest afforded, and earning sufficient to obtain by exchange clothing and food for his family.

At the beginning of the Revolutionary war, although then but about

eighteen years of age, he accompanied the warriors of his tribe upon various expeditions against the inhabitants of the northern frontiers of the American colonies. It has been said that he was secretly instructed by his grandmother Eunice, to follow the Indian detachments, with the view of preventing, if possible, the massacre of feeble and defenceless women and children; and on various occasions he exerted himself to excite feelings of humanity and kindness towards the Americans who fell into their hands.

In October, 1776, he headed his band when the armed vessels of the British and Americans came to action

opposite Valcour's Island, near Plattsburgh. Thomas, with his warriors, had a full view of the battle, and he was much animated at the bravery of the Americans, and exclaimed, "These brave Americans will have the liberty they want!"

In 1777 he was promoted to the rank of a war chief of his band, which gave him greater power and influence. As he was brave and energetic in his movements, he soon came to be beloved by his brother warriors, and highly respected by the British officers, especially by Major Carleton, and Captains Horton and Ross, who were his friends during the war. In the

spring of this year, when called upon to prepare himself and his warriors to cooperate with General Burgoyne's army, then assembling at St. Johns and the Isle Aux Noix, he appeared to be in great despondency. His friends assigned various reasons for this, but knowing as he did that Gen. Burgoyne had a large army under his command, and that resistance would be made by the Americans against the invasion of their country, in which much blood would be shed, and many valuable lives lost, the better feelings of humanity were awakened in his breast, and sadness appeared in his countenance. He however resolved to

serve God in this affair, and to deal equally with his fellow-man.

At Cumberland Head he and his corps joined the royal army, where he met his friends Captains Horton and Ross. In the retreat of the Americans from Ticonderoga, he and his Indians were among others ordered to pursue them; but discovering the course they had taken, he took his route more to the left, under the pretence of falling upon their flank, but the circuit was too great to allow them to take part in the action between Colonel Warner and General Frazer. The object in view by the Indian captain was undoubtedly gained.

In August, General Burgoyne detached Col. Baum with five hundred men, and one hundred Indians, under the command of Thomas; and on the sixteenth the former was attacked at Bennington, by General Stark. Thomas arrived with his Indian warriors soon after the action had commenced, and his sagacious eye immediately discovered that the Hessian colonel would be defeated, and he accordingly took precaution not to be surrounded by the Americans, and held them in the woods, where they kept up a scattering fire for a time, but at too great a distance to be effectual. A party of the Americans having taken a secret path

gained their rear, and opened upon the Indians a heavy fire, which caused them to retreat in great confusion without further resistance, as their white allies had by this time ceased to fire. Four or five of the Indians were killed and several of their party slightly wounded, among whom was Captain De Loromie, an Indian agent, and an officer in the Indian department in the British service, who acted as an interpreter. Thomas met Col. Breyman as he was advancing to sustain Colonel Baum, but would not consent to turn back with him. "We are defeated," said he, "and it is of no use to meet with superior numbers, and if

you proceed you will share the same fate." De Loromie rather joined in this advice, which was received by Colonel Breyman in a most ungracious manner, and an angry dispute arose between the young chief-warrior and the colonel, which was finally settled by the interference of the officers, and the advancing party retraced their steps.

It may be proper to here state, that the murder of Miss Jane McCrea, near Fort Edward, was regarded with strong disapprobation by Thomas. Captain Jones once applied to him for assistance in bringing the young lady within the British lines, but he declined to

undertake so delicate and dangerous an enterprise, and replied: " You have come to conquer the country ; if you succeed you will have your white squaw : she is now safe, and to attempt to take her by force by our Indians may endanger her life, as there may be a skirmish in so doing ; so she had better remain where she now is." A few days after this, Captain Jones applied to Captain Langlad, who had charge of the western tribes, consisting of Ottawas, Chippeways, Menominies, and Winnebagos, and the latter were employed to bring Miss McCrea into the camp. Two chiefs of different bands were employed in this service, each

ignorant of the object of the other in the enterprise. One of these had succeeded in getting the young lady safely into their hands, when the other party coming up found the object of their pursuit already obtained, and their head warrior demanded of the other party to give her up to him and his friends, as they had been sent by Captain Jones to bring her in. The former replied, "We are on a similar errand, and the bird is in our hands." Upon which a contest ensued between the leaders, and in the affray the lady was murdered. It has been entirely through mistake that some late writers have attributed this murder to the St.

Regis Indians.* Williams urged the Iroquois chiefs, then in camp, to wait upon General Burgoyne and beg him to put an end to this inhuman conduct, and the British general rebuked the western tribes in such a manner that they were offended, and soon after deserted from the army.

He was present at the battles of Saratoga, on the 19th of September and 7th of October, and on the night of the 8th, after consulting with the other chiefs, they left the encampment

* During the residence of the Rev. E. Williams at Green Bay, a Winnebago chief related to him more than once of his having a hand in this murder.—*Note by the Author.*

at about two o'clock, and took up their march to Lake George. His humanity would not permit him to leave one sick warrior, and all were brought away on litters, and carried safely to their village.

In the autumn of 1778, he went, at the call of Colonel Johnson, with a party to Oswego, with the view of invading the Mohawk country; but the design was given up. In 1779 he accompanied a detachment under the command of his friend Captain Horton, as far as White River, in Vermont, where they ravaged a number of white settlements, among which was Royalton, and took a number of prisoners.

His influence was exerted to have these treated with humanity, and through his efforts many houses and barns were saved, two females were protected from abuse at the hands of three St. François Indians, and an aged man was spared, who would have been killed had he not defended him. Observing this, Captain Horton pleasantly observed: " My friend I am not surprised at this; you have Bostonian blood running in your veins." He replied, " Yes, and I glory in it, as it is tinctured with humanity, the true spirit of Christianity."

In February, 1780, he headed a party of Iroquois and St. François In-

dians, under Captain Raynier of Quebec, on a secret mission to the Penobscot river, with dispatches from Gov. Carleton to the commandant of the fort at the mouth of that river. This was a fatiguing service, in the midst of a hard winter, and was performed upon raquettes.* They passed the American guards upon pretence of belonging to the Penobscot tribe, and Raynier, entering the fort on an island in the night, delivered his dispatches. The party returned safely, and their good conduct was applauded by the governor. During their stay in the city, they received

* Snow-shoes.—ED.

large presents in gold, with blankets, linen of a fine quality, rifles, kettles, knives, silver broaches and silver medals.

After remaining seven days in his village, Thomas was again called upon to head his band in an expedition under Sir John Johnson to the Mohawk river, and this was the last of his services under the British during the revolution. He was present at the attack upon the dwelling of Colonel Vischer, where the latter was scalped and left for dead, but revived and lived many years afterwards. His two brothers were killed, and the house was burned. Thomas and Col.

Louis had a friendly interview with Colonel Vischer in 1795. "We met once," said the brave colonel, "as enemies; but Colonel Vischer still lives, and we will now meet over his good wine and brandy as friends, for we are commanded from above to forgive our enemies." His friends responded with *Amen*.

The Indians, on this occasion, received positive orders from Sir John to burn all the buildings on their route, and he was prevented from being as humane as formerly, and the ravages committed upon the defenceless inhabitants under the eye of Sir John and with his encouragement, produced no

good feeling on the part of Williams, who disapproved of such inhuman conduct on the part of the tories and some of the Indian warriors.

Sir John, from this period, regarded him with jealousy, but Williams stood so high in the esteem of Governor Carleton and the officers of the army, for the important services he had rendered to government, that he dared not come to an open rupture. He was proud, haughty, selfish, and contentious to a shameful degree, and was the more despised by the Canadian Indians from his partiality to the recently emigrated Mohawks, his former neighbors, over whom his father, Sir

William, had acted as agent for nearly half a century. The hatred engendered in this campaign never ceased to burn, and influenced the conduct of Williams in the subsequent war between Great Britain and America.

From this period he appears to have followed his usual vocation, and after the peace of 1783 he began, with several of his friends, to hunt in the vicinity of Crown Point and Lake George. He often visited Albany with his peltries, and always had a friendly intercourse with General Schuyler, who was once a pupil of the Rev. Dr. Stephen Williams, of Longmeadow, Mass., the brother of Eunice the grandmother of Thomas.

In 1783, after having hunted a great part of the winter in the vicinity of Lake George, he went down to Albany with his friend and fellow hunter John Baptist Toietakherontie, with whom, after receiving letters of recommendation from General Schuyler and other gentlemen in Albany, he proceeded to New England to visit his relatives for the first time. He arrived at Stockbridge, Mass., at the house of the Rev. Dr. West,* where he happily met the

* Stephen West, of Tolland, Ct., graduated at Yale College in 1755, was licensed to preach about the beginning of 1758, and was ordained at Stockbridge, June 13, 1759. He continued to preach to the English in the forenoon, and the Indians, through an interpreter, in the af-

noted Rev. Samuel Kirkland, missionary to the Oneida Indians, who understood his language perfectly, and acted on the occasion as interpreter. Here he passed two days in a most agreeable manner with several respectable families who claimed to be his kindred, and with strong recommending letters from the reverend gentlemen and others of the place, "to all whom it might concern," they continued on their route to Longmeadow, the place of their destination.

ternoon of each Sabbath until 1775, when he relinquished the latter to Mr. John Sergeant, a son of the missionary. He died in 1819, aged 84.—*Holland's Western Massachusetts*, II, 587.

His object was to visit the Rev. Dr. Stephen Williams,* the venerated brother of his grandmother Eunice; but on his arrival he found, to his sorrow and regret, that he was dead. He died on the third of June, 1782. He had, and preserved, letters addressed to him, written in December of the preceding year, from his beloved and unfortunate sister Eunice, who address-

* Stephen Williams was born at Deerfield May 14, 1693, graduated at Harvard in 1713, and went to Longmeadow in Nov., 1719. He was afterwards a chaplain in three campaigns in the old French and Indian wars, and died, according to some accounts, June 10, 1782, in the 66th year of his ministry, and the 90th of his age.—*Holland's Western Massachusetts*, II, 78.

ing him in most affectionate terms, said :

“ My beloved brother, once in captivity with me, and I am still so as you may consider it, but I am free in the Lord. We are now both very old and are still permitted by the goodness of God to live in the land of the living. This may be the last time you may hear from me. Oh, pray for me that I may be prepared for death, and I trust we may meet in Heaven with all our godly relatives.”

Her brother, as it was believed, was already there, waiting for her to enjoy with him the full fruition of God.

From this period Thomas visited,

occasionally, his kind relatives in New England, till 1806. After the removal of the Rev. Dr. Samuel Williams from his professorship in Harvard University to Rutland, Vermont, he made his house one of his stopping places on his route.*

This reverend gentleman was equidistant with Thomas in descent from the Reverend John Williams, of Deerfield, who was taken captive in 1704, as before stated. For this gentleman he had a peculiar regard, and he

* Samuel Williams graduated at Harvard University in 1740, received the Master's degree in 1785, and held the office of Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy in that institution from 1780 to 1788.

often said that Professor Williams was the glory of the Williams family, on account of his learning. Dr. Williams, in his history of Vermont,* has, it is said, in his article on Indians, made use of the information which he derived from Thomas, in relation to their customs, manners, habits, laws, government and religion. If so, it may be relied upon as a just representation, coming, as it did, from one who was well acquainted with them.

These Indians claimed a considerable amount of land in the state of New

* Two editions of this work have been published. The first was in 1794, in one volume, and the second in 1809, in two volumes.

York, which they felt had been taken from them by force, and contrary to the eternal principles of justice and equity, and this became a subject of much discussion among them at St. Regis and Caughnawaga. None of them knew how to set up their claim, and Colonel Louis, Thomas Williams and William Gray, were in 1789 called upon for their opinions on the subject, which was left in their hands to bring before the proper authorities, in New York.

A long negotiation ensued, and the three deputies made many tedious journeys to New York, Philadelphia and Albany, during seven years, before

this perplexing affair was settled by the state, in a treaty with the Seven Nations of Canada, held at New York in June, 1796. The land bordering on the national boundary line of 45 degrees, from Salmon river to Massena, which the state repurchased from Macomb, Constable, and others, was awarded to the St. Regis Indians.*

* A tract equal to six miles square, near St. Regis, was expressly reserved out of the lands sold to Macomb, and only a tract of about 210 acres along Grass river, consisting of natural meadows, was repurchased from the proprietors by the state for the use of the Indians.

The St. Regis reservation lies in the town of Bombay, Franklin county, N. Y., and originally embraced a tract equal to six miles square, the meadows above mentioned, a mile square

The personal acquaintance of Thomas Williams with various members of the state government, and their knowledge of his ancestry, are believed to have had an influence in obtaining a favorable result in the negotiation. Yet, notwithstanding this, from causes to be presently noticed, his heirs have been denied a share in the lands and annuities enjoyed by the American portion of the tribe. It is hoped the

on Salmon river, at the present village of Fort Covington, and a mile square on Grass river at the lower mills.

By successive sales these reservations have now been reduced to about 14,000 acres of choice land, a part of which is leased to whites for a term of years.—*Census of N. Y.*, 1855, p. 517.—ED.

legislature will correct this wrong towards those who have labored so faithfully for their benefit. In the first payment at Chazy, in 1797, only \$100 was applied as a remuneration to Thomas Williams for the money and time he had expended during several years in these negotiations. To induce the state to relinquish this tract, the Indian negotiators strongly asserted that it was in part for the benefit of the sixteen Caughnawaga volunteers who entered the Continental service in the Revolution, and for such as might hereafter sustain a similar relation. Notwithstanding this plausible argument, the St. Regis Indians afterwards

claimed the whole tract as belonging to themselves alone, and have manifested an ungenerous feeling towards those who were instrumental in procuring the tract they now occupy, and the annuities, amounting to over two thousand dollars, that they enjoy.*

* The Caughnawagas shared equally with the St. Regis Indians in the annuities stipulated in the treaty of 1796, until the war of 1812. A few years after, through the influence of Mr. Peter Saille of Plattsburgh, a moiety of the annuity was restored to them, with the express understanding that Thomas Williams should receive \$50 annually from their portion, as he had met with considerable sacrifices in consequence of the war. He continued to receive this until 1833, when they entered a protest, and he was not paid.

The above Caughnawagas have never been

This ungenerous and selfish feeling may be attributed to two causes.

First. The British influence is still felt by a portion of the tribe, and the Indians of that party maintain their relations as they did during the war, and have no good feeling towards the American part of the tribe.* Second.

parties to any treaty or agreement with the state since 1796; and the other villages, representing the remaining "Seven Nations of Canada," have never been represented in any treaty with New York.

History will scarcely warrant the uncharitable allegation of the author in relation to the St. Regis tribe.—ED.

* In the war of 1812-15, the St. Regis Indians became divided in their attachment to the two governments, and although at first they pro-

The Romish religion, to which most of the tribe are subject has a tendency to keep them in an unquiet state, and the influence of its priesthood, who are generally tenacious of their dogmas

fessed to be neutral, numbers from both parties went off and joined the camps of the opposing armies. These parties have continued till the present time, and the distinction has become hereditary on the mother's side. The British Indians receive no share of the rents or annuities paid in New York, and the Americans none of the rents or presents paid in Canada. They however reside upon either side of the national boundary that passes through their village, as convenience dictates, and mingle freely in the daily transactions of life in perfect harmony. There are about 530 American and 640 British Indians, who receive a share of the annuities and presents of their respective governments.—
ED.

and ceremonies, has the effect of keeping the Indians opposed to those of different sentiments.* The Protestant part of the tribe are increasing, and have a desire to educate their children, but are feeble as to means, and it is

* St. Regis was founded as a Catholic mission, and has for nearly a century been the home of a resident missionary of that denomination. With the exception of about one hundred, chiefly Methodists, these Indians are strongly attached to the Catholic church, and zealous observers of its requirements. On this account, the Rev. Mr. Williams had the confidence of but a small portion of the tribe among whom he had been so long a resident. He was accustomed to attribute much of the opposition he encountered, to the hostility arising from the two causes above indicated, and especially from the latter.—ED.

hoped will be aided by Christian philanthropists.*

In August, 1798, Williams was called upon by the British authorities to head a party on a secret mission on Lake Champlain. The government of Canada had been disturbed by an attempt to surprise and take Quebec by some French revolutionists headed by one McCler. It was reported that a large party was preparing on Lake

* At the time when the above was written (1852) the author was endeavoring to establish a school among the Indians upon the St. Regis reservation, but the enterprise did not meet with success, and was soon after suspended. A log building which he caused to be erected for his school was turned into a dwelling.—ED.

Champlain, to descend the St. Lawrence to Quebec upon rafts, in the guise of raftsmen, and when a considerable number of men had thus assembled without attracting notice, they were, at a preconcerted signal, to attack the military guard by night and seize the fortress. The instruction to Williams was, to appear among the parties in the character of a hunter, and to mingle with them as friends, and to ascertain their numbers and intentions. This service be performed to the satisfaction of the Canadian government. The leader of the conspiracy was beheaded and quartered.

In January, 1800, Williams visited

his relatives in New England, and took with him his two boys, to be educated by them, as they had before urged him to do.

It may not be amiss here to state, that of "one of these youths (Eleazer) aged about fourteen or fifteen, it has been doubted whether he is really the son of Thomas Williams. It is supposed he is an adopted child of high descent, who in the destruction of the royal family in the French revolution, was, with his sister, saved from the guillotine of the revolutionists. It is a mystery yet to be solved whether he is the son of Louis XVI, king of France, and at this distant period

perhaps it will never be. There are, however, many circumstances in the history of this unfortunate youth which go to prove that there is a possibility of its being true. To save the life of the youth, as well as his rescuers and other friends, from the bloody hands of the anti-royalists, a profound secrecy was necessarily observed, both in Europe and America, by those who were interested in his preservation."

Hidden things are yet to be brought to light. This is one of the "Unfortunate youth born in a palace and nourished by the royal queen, yet transported to a foreign clime and there to be cherished and sustained by an Indian warrior!"

In the year 1801, Thomas headed a hunting party of Caughnawaga Indians in the service of the Northwest Bay Company, and went as far as the Red river, and from thence towards the Rocky mountains, and traversed part of the grand prairies. The view of these immense prairies in the spring season, covered with numerous herds of buffaloes, and stretching farther than the eye could reach, and of the majestic peaks of the western mountains, filled his mind with wonder, admiration and awe, and he often said, that in these he saw the mighty works of the Great Spirit above, and was led to worship him as the only supreme

creator and upholder of all things ; that him only would he serve, and to him devote his whole heart and obey his blessed will. He was a man of few words. He thought and meditated on what he said, and what he uttered was sincere.

In 1804, with his wife, he visited his sons in Longmeadow, where they had been left at school, and was highly pleased with the improvement they had made in American manners, and their progress in learning. N. Ely, Esq., a gentleman of wealth, who had married a grand daughter of the Rev. Dr. S. Williams, formerly minister of the parish, took a deep interest in

the education of the youths, and particularly in endeavoring to instill into their minds the great truths of religion. But, unfortunately, John, the younger of the lads, who appeared to be the mother's favorite, was taken back with his parents to Canada, much against the wish of the father, and to the great regret and sorrow of Eleazer, who protested in the strongest terms against being separated from him. But her parish priest had threatened to excommunicate her from the church if she did not bring the boys back with her, and she hoped to escape his censure if she returned with one.

The Rev. Dr. Nathan Williams of

Tolland, the Rev. Nathan Strong of Hartford, the Rev. Dr. McCluer of East Windsor, the Rev. R. S. Storrs and N. Ely, Esq., of Longmeadow, the Rev. Dr. Joseph Lathrop and Justin Ely, Esq., of West Springfield, the Rev. Mr. Howard and Dr. William Sheldon of Springfield, Gov. Trumbull of Connecticut, and C. Strong of Massachusetts, took a deep interest in the welfare of Eleazer, and succeeded in retaining him for the purpose of continuing his education.

From this period there is a chasm in the historical incidents of the life of Thomas Williams, till the declaration of war in 1812, as nothing in this interval occurred worthy of note. It

was the wish of the Americans that the Indians should remain neutral in this as in the former war. Humanity and civilization pleaded in favor of a principle that would not add savage barbarity to the evils of war; but unfortunately the policy of their enemy was different, and they soon learned that the British had leagued themselves with the ruthless savages of the wilderness and the domiciliated native tribes of the provinces; in short, that they had exhausted every resource from the warfare of the tomahawk and the scalping-knife to the latest improvements of modern art, which they were preparing to use against the people of the United States.

The first act in which the allied Indians and British signalized themselves, was the taking of the fort at Michilimackinac, on the 19th of July, 1812, at which several Caughnawagas from Lower Canada were present.

In July, Governor Provost of Lower Canada issued a proclamation commanding the Indians in that province to take up arms in behalf of his Britannic Majesty, and this order was by Sir John Johnson* transmitted to Williams, but indignantly rejected.

* Sir John was at this time Superintendent General and Inspector General of Indian Affairs in British North America, retaining that office till his death. He died at Montreal in 1830, aged eighty-eight.—ED.

Col. De Loromie, Sub-Superintendent of the Indian Department, soon after reported him and others at Caughnawaga, as well as Col. Louis Cook and others at St. Regis, as refractory.

The St. François Indians, as well as those of the Lake of Two Mountains, evinced in some degree the same spirit; and the French Canadians on the Island of Montreal were by no means inclined to take up arms against the Americans. The affair at La Chine in August, in which fifteen hundred of these people skirmished with the royal troops, strongly indicated the ill-will with which they received the proclamation of the Governor General. How

far Thomas Williams was concerned in this affair is unknown. He was within two miles of the place where the action occurred.

Such was the timidity or treachery of the French commander upon this occasion that, neglecting to seize the king's stores and arms as might have been done, as his force was much more formidable than that which opposed him, he ordered his forces to withdraw after ten minutes firing. His order was obeyed with reluctance by those in the front line, and with loud murmurs by the volunteers in the rear, who were eager to be brought into action with the English troops, and

determined to evince the same spirit that was evinced by those of their mother country under Bonaparte.

The retreat threw them into disorder, and the whole body quickly dispersed. It has been asserted, from highly respectable sources, that if the American government had sent two thousand regular troops into the province at this particular juncture, the whole of Lower Canada must have fallen into their hands, except Quebec, as the French population would have taken up arms in their favor.

In August, 1812, a provisional agreement was entered into between Gen. Dearborn and Adjutant Gen. Baynes,

that neither party should act offensively until the decision of the American government could be obtained on a question then pending. This armistice was grounded upon a letter from the governor, Sir George Provost, to General Dearborn, suggesting the probability of a general suspension of hostilities in consequence of a suspension or repeal of the British orders in council, of which Mr. Foster, late minister to the United States, had received advices on his arrival at Halifax.

The American government considered the proposition as indirect, and offered no security for its observance,

and the cessation of hostilities terminated on the 8th of September.

While Adjutant Gen. Baynes was at the head-quarters of Gen. Dearborn, Lieut. Col. Eleazer Williams was sent off to the lines near Rouse's Point, where he met, according to previous agreement, Sir John Johnson, Superintendent General of Indian Affairs in the Canadas, and Williams appeared in the same capacity on the American side, for the northern frontiers. Their object was to arrange for the neutrality of the Indian tribes; but the proposition of Gen. Dearborn was respectfully declined by Sir John, and finally left to the decision of Sir George Provost.

In relation to this affair, it was remarked by Sir John, that young Williams argued like a young lion upon the subject; that he not only pleaded upon principles of humanity and civilization, but of religion, which would not add savage barbarity to the other evils of the war. “Your king,” said he, “styles himself the *Defender of the Christian Faith*, and will he league himself with the ruthless savages of the wilderness, whose tender mercies are to be manifested by the tomahawk and the scalping-knife—and that not only upon the wounded and captive of the American soldiery, but upon defenceless women and children? Sir,

I have too exalted an opinion of British humanity, and of the principles of religion by which the English nation is governed, to admit this unholy alliance. England is the bulwark of the Protestant religion! Yes, sir, she may well glory that she is the emporium of Bible and Missionary societies. In the midst of this corrupt age and bloody strife among the nations of the earth, she is sending forth the word giving life to the dark corners of the earth, and her messengers of the Cross are proclaiming 'Peace on earth, and good will to men.' ”*

* Judge Moore and Col. Mix of Champlain were permitted to be present on the occasion,

The sole object of young Williams, it would appear, at this period of the war, was to save the St. Regis Indians, who were peculiarly situated, being on the line, and, as it were, within strik-

and reported this to General B. Mooers as one of the most interesting scenes which fixed their attention at the commencement of the war. There was a great contrast between the negotiators in their appearance and dress. Sir John, aged about sixty-five, and Williams twenty-three or four: the former in scarlet and gold lace in abundance, with high military hat decked with lace and feathers; and with his broadsword; while the young American was dressed in a plain frock coat and round hat, with his elegant hanger and pocket pistols. But with his good sense and powerful and humane arguments Sir John had enough of it. After a good cheer the parties separated.—*Note by the Author.*
ED.

ing distance of the two contending parties.*

He succeeded, and Sir George Provoost was induced, under the circumstances, to permit the neutral party to remain in peace in their village.

* The national boundary, as surveyed and marked by monuments, passes directly through the Indian village at St. Regis. The tribe is still divided into British and American parties, without reference to present residence, but according to the way they sided in the war of 1812-15. This distinction is hereditary, and transmitted from mother to son. Each shares in the annuities or presents of its own government only, but resides wherever upon the reservation his interests or inclinations lead him. Transfers may be made by consent of the chiefs or trustees, but it is believed this is not often done.—ED.

A portion of them, however, afterwards took up arms and joined Gen. Hampton's army in 1813, and were with him in the skirmish on Chateaugay river.

It is said that General Dearborn and Dr. Eustis, Secretary of War, were highly pleased with the management of their young native negotiator, as the policy and humanity of the American government towards the unfortunate Indians was so well represented. Gen. Mooers, in his report of this affair to Gen. Dearborn and Gov. Tompkins, was enthusiastic in his praise of young Williams.

At this period of the war, by the

agency of General Dearborn, as commander-in-chief of the Northern army, Gen. Mooers of the New York division, and Gov. Tompkins and Judge Pliny Moore of Champlain, Thomas Williams, the Iroquois chief, was invited by the American government to retire from the British province, and place himself and family under the protection of the American flag, with an assurance of honorable support; and the American government solemnly engaged to make up to him and his family whatever losses he might sustain in personal property, and the interest he might enjoy in common with his tribe. With these honorable offers and assurances

he left the British province in 1813, and warmly engaged in the American cause; and through his influence, many of the British Indians became attached to their interests. His influence was strongly felt in the invasion of New York at Plattsburgh in 1819, by Sir George Prevost, with 14,000 regulars and 700 Indians, who refused at Champlain to advance any farther with the royal troops. They knew that Thomas Williams, their beloved war-chief, with his sons, was with the Americans at Plattsburgh. This refusal on the part of the Indians to advance is an established fact, and the cause was then secret. While at Champlain, although

within the American lines, they committed no depredations, but conducted themselves respectfully towards the inhabitants, particularly towards Judge Moore and Col. Mix.

Although Gen. Brisbane, the commander of the advance division of the army, pretended to Silas Hubbell, a magistrate of Champlain, that the Indians were kept in arrear out of humanity; yet in a council of war at La Cole river, held by Sir George Provost and the war-chiefs, he was told in strong language of the propriety of their remaining in the rear of the army, and so determined were they that his excellency was compelled from necessity

to submit to their decision. At the same place, on the retreat of the royal army after their defeat at Plattsburgh, the officers of the Indian Department made a strong effort to obtain volunteers from among the Indians, by offering large rewards to retake the ships of war captured by the Americans, by the aid of the few remaining gunboats, but this application was rejected by their allies.

Thomas Williams, after this affair, says in his address to them: "Brothers, I have not deceived you in the result of the late campaign on the part of the red coats. I told you they would not succeed, but that a defeat would follow

such an attempt. Saranac (or Plattsburgh) is safe, and its strongholds are spangled with their flags, and the eagle and its stripes are floating in the air in all their glory. If the British army had remained four days longer at the place it would have been Burgoyned, and had I been with them, I should have fled in the night, as I did in 1777 at Saratoga, after the last battle with the brave Yankees. They beat the English then, and gained their independence, and be assured they will beat them again!"

His son John was in an honorable office in the British service, but soon followed his father into the United

States, with several others of the Caughnawagas. This son was a brave and fearless volunteer. On the morning of September 5th, at Beekmantown, he was in the advanced rifle corps, which opened the first fire upon the enemy, and as it advanced he disputed every inch of ground, until the corps reached the main force under General Mooers. The general action commenced by cannonading from the American line, by two hundred and fifty regular troops, under Major Wool, who maintained this position with great obstinacy until they were completely outflanked by the superior force of the enemy; and when compelled to retreat,

they did so in good order, disputing the ground for five miles with the advancing columns of the enemy. Col. Willington, leading the British column of Brisbane's brigade, was shot down within two miles of Plattsburgh, and this shot is supposed to have been from the weapon of John Williams, whose aim was sure of its object. We have not room to notice other feats of valor performed by this young man in the service of the United States.

The other son, Colonel E. Williams (the Superintendent General), when a general attack was made by the enemy at Plattsburgh, by land and water, had charge of one of the moveable

batteries, which played furiously and answering to one of the enemy's batteries on Ferris's Point, and at the close of the cannonade, he was slightly wounded.

It must not be omitted to mention here, that in all probability, he rendered an important service on that day, which saved from a complete discomfiture the American force, and the captivity of the forts and their defenders.*

After the surrender of the enemy's fleet and the recall of the royal troops from the battle-field, a council of war

* Historians will probably be inclined to differ from the author in some of these statements.—
ED.

was called by Sir George Provost at 3 o'clock, at which to sustain the honor of the army, and the British flag, it was determined to carry the forts by storm, at the dawn of the next day, and at the point of the bayonet. To effect this, scaling ladders were provided and eight thousand of the best troops were divided into three columns, commanded by Gens. Brisbane, Powers, and De Rottenburgh, and three thousand of the regulars and one thousand of the light corps were selected to contend with American militia.

But in the mean time a *coup de main* was played upon Sir George, which completely disconcerted his former plan.

This was planned by Col. E. Williams, the confidential secret agent of the government, and approved by Generals Macomb and Mooers, who urged most earnestly to have the plan immediately carried into effect; and no means at the command of these officers were withheld to have it consummated. The plan involved danger and difficulty, but it was in the hands of a judicious and sagacious hand. With an eagle's eye, he foresaw the good that might be derived from it if properly executed, and with faithful and patriotic co-operators it was accomplished. By them, Sir George was alarmed at 5 o'clock, by a report that the Governor

of Vermont was on his march with ten thousand men, and ready to enter the village of Missisqui Bay, with the intention to gain his rear; that seven hundred bateaux (which were known by him to be at that place) were on their way to Plattsburgh, to take the troops, to descend with the fleet to *Isle aux Noix*, and that the Americans in his front were hourly expecting to be reinforced with eight thousand men of the best troops, while those on the ground were eager, in consequence of the defeat of his fleet and the retreat of his troops from the battle field, to follow him into the province. Gen. Man, from Franklin and St. Lawrence counties, was

reported as on his march with three thousand militia, to fall upon his rear that night or the next day, at Champlain; and the whole American force of the northern frontier as in motion to oppose him, rendering every hour of the greatest importance to his excellency. This unexpected intelligence alarmed Sir George, whose attacking troops had been recalled, in consequence of the loss of his fleet, and he most reluctantly gave orders for the whole army to retreat that very night.

This *coup de main*, played upon the British commander by Col. E. Williams, saved the defences at Plattsburgh, the honor of the American troops, and the

flag of the United States. It verified the military maxim that "with judicious management whole armies have been taken or defeated," but how far this important service is appreciated by the American government does not appear.

At the time of the event, and on the historic page, it has been boasted that the discomfiture and retreat of the enemy, was due to the bravery of the Vermont and New York volunteers; but every living man who had a knowledge of the affair must acknowledge *that there is a mystery* connected with the sudden retreat of the enemy, who with fourteen thousand of the best

troops, unaccustomed to fear and supported by a formidable train of artillery. They had suffered so little on the 11th, that his strength for battle with raw and undisciplined militia, remained unabated, and some other reasonable cause for his retreat must be found, than the heavy skirmish of that day. The light corps of the Third of the Buffs (as they were called) were only engaged and brought into action, the remaining force of ten thousand being only in motion when they were recalled.

In comparing the number of militia then in the field, against the best disciplined troops of England, they must

have yielded on that day, to such overwhelming force, and the victory would have been on the side of the enemy. General Brisbane wanted only twenty minutes with his three columns to carry the American works, but to the great mortification of this brave and active general, he was recalled. He remarked in the council of war, that it was his wish to retain the honor of the army, and if possible in some measure to retrieve the tarnished fame of the fleet, by attacking or carrying the American works, which he justly remarked were in an unfinished condition, and that in twenty minutes all

might be in the hands of his majesty's troops!

The author or planner was too modest to make it known as a pretext to raise himself in the estimation of the government. It is stated that this important affair had been *kept down* by Generals Macomb and Mooers, lest their own fame in the victory of Plattsburgh should be lessened in the public view. But the American government is too magnanimous to forget those who have rendered her valuable and important services like this! By this judicious measure, her honor was sustained, her troops, with immense quantities of property, were saved, and the whole

northern frontier was relieved from a troublesome enemy.

But to return to the biography of Thomas Williams. In December, 1815, he repaired to Albany, accompanied by his son, Col. E. Williams, to consult with Gov. Tompkins and Lieut. Gov. Tayer, on the propriety of his reminding the government of their engagements with him. He was advised to proceed to Washington and present his claims. With letters from these two officers, and from military officers at that place, and with aid of state funds, he proceeded to the capital of the union, where he was received with great cordiality by the president, and other

officers of the executive departments, particularly by Mr. Dallas of the state department, and Mr. Crawford, secretary of war. For want of suitable papers conformable to the laws, it was recommended to him to procure them, and the secretary of war was engaged to present them to congress; but they were mislaid, and the old and patriotic chief suffered much from the infidelity of the government towards him. He died without the compensation promised, and his aged widow is now an applicant for relief on his account.*

* The widow of Thomas Williams was, in 1852, residing on the St. Regis reservation, about eight miles from the village, and although over ninety years of age, walked regularly to

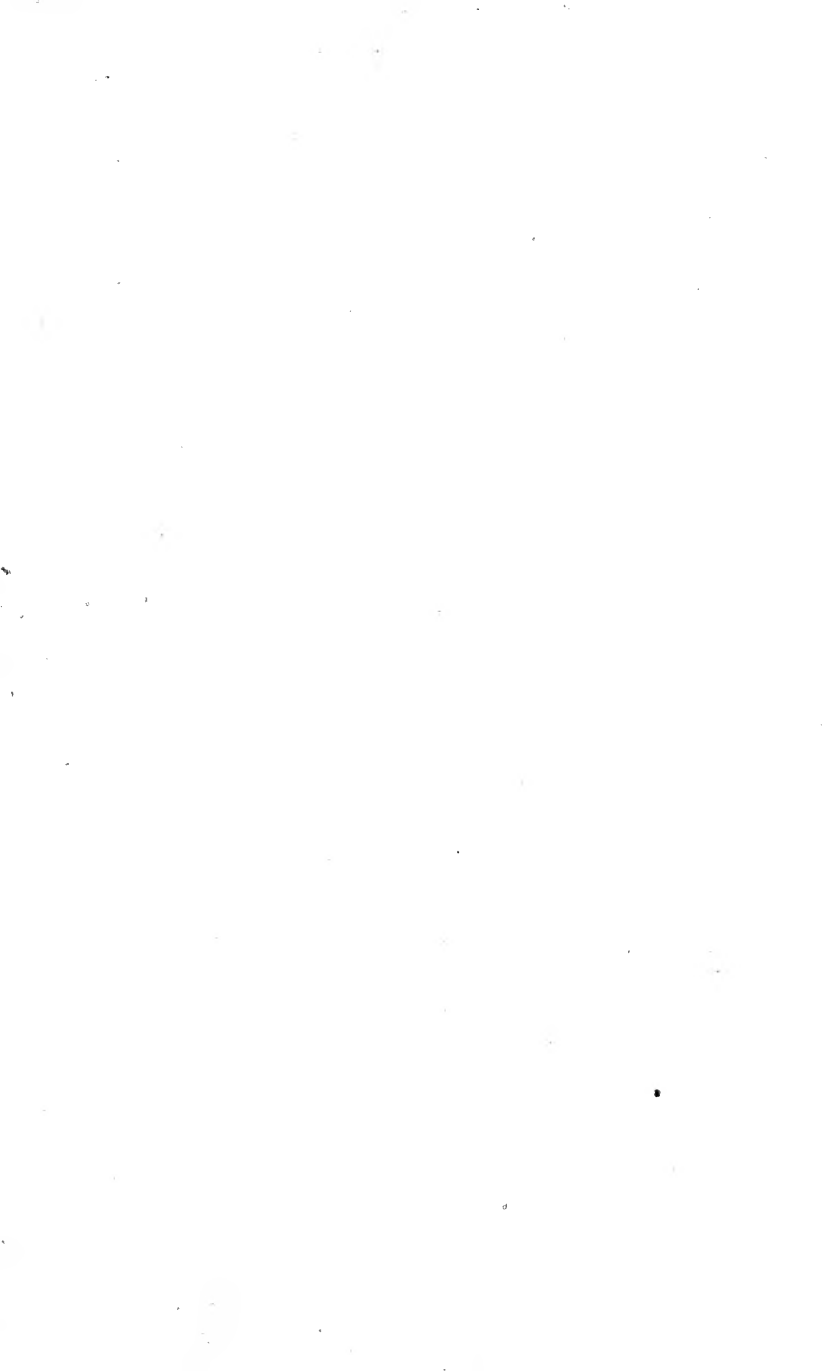
Thomas Williams, having served his own people, the British and American governments, died in his native village, August 16, 1849. In person he was above the common size, with a countenance manly and speaking with intelligence. In his politics he was a strenuous republican, and by attaching himself to the American cause, in the war of 1812, he lost the graces of the British government in the Canadas. The functionaries in the Indian depart-

church, with no other aid but a staff. She was apparently a full blooded Indian, tall and slender, but little bowed with age, and still able to attend to her domestic duties. She was a devout Catholic, and spoke no language but Mohawk. She has since died.—Ed.

ment ceased not to trouble him on that account. His memory will be cherished by his American friends.







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