

1698.

The
Governor's
proposition
to the
Iroquois.

To this declaration they added, it is true, a proposition, which somewhat reassured him and induced him to cloak his resentment; this was to detain the Indians of Sault St. Louis, who were among them, till the Count de Frontenac had sent back all the Iroquois whom he detained. He nevertheless durst not become a party to this perfidy, for fear the odium would revert on him. He even added that the cantons must not be surprised to see their affairs in a wretched plight, and that to secure peace with the French they must solicit it by a deputation of the whole nation; that he wished to obtain this peace, so essential to their preservation; but that to enable him to terminate this important matter advantageously for them, it was expedient that they should give up to him all their prisoners, he undertaking to convey them to Montreal.

Then he told them, that he was aware that they had waged war from time immemorial on the nations styled allies of the French; that he left them free to continue it or make peace; but that he forbade all hostilities against the French and among the Indians domiciliated among them. Then addressing the Iroquois of Sault St. Louis, he told them that he was delighted to see them on his territory, where they should be ever welcome, and that the past must be forgotten. To these marks of friendship he added presents which they accepted; but they told him that they could give no reply, nor make any arrangement with him, because they were not empowered thereto by their sachems or their father Ononchio.¹

The
Iroquois
seem
inclined
to
peace.

Frontenac asked what reply the sachems had made to Bellomont's request for the delivery of the prisoners to him. They told him that they had consented to it, but without fixing a time for its execution. The General saw

¹ Relation &c., 1697-8. New York Col. Doc., ix., p. 684. Conference between the Earl of Bellomont and the Five Nations of Indians at Albany, July 20, 1698, printed by Bradford, reprinted in vol. III. N. Y. Historical Society, new series. It is referred to N. Y. Col. Doc., iv., p. 367.

The Iroquois during the war had been reduced from 2650, to 1230 fighting men. N. Y. Col. Doc., iv., p. 367; Belmont, Histoire du Canada, p. 36, says that they were reduced to half, and puts the French loss in killed and taken at 600.