

at St. Louis,¹ which were sent to Prairie du Chien to ascertain the feelings of the people, and to invite them to join the Americans in their cause against Great Britain. The arrival of these letters caused considerable alarm and much excitement among the people, and at a meeting of the principal traders it was decided to forward the letters to Michilimackinac and place themselves under the protection of the British government, and at the same time to request that assistance and ammunition be sent to them to enable the inhabitants to defend the place until it could be occupied by a British garrison.

In the meantime, while the Americans were making preparations to ascend the Mississippi, the British were not idle. The taking of Michilimackinac in the beginning of the war had given them the control of a great part of the Indian territory, throughout which they lost no time in extending their influence. And it was more effectually to carry out their plan of operations in what was then termed the "conquered countries" that the British organized the Western Indian Department, on whose officers in a great measure devolved the arduous and trying duty of visiting the various tribes to organize war parties, and lead them into action. On finding it impossible to send immediate assistance to the inhabitants of Prairie du Chien, that place, as well as the whole of the Indian territory, was temporarily placed under the control of the Western Indian Department, and the entire charge of Indian affairs was intrusted by Sir George Prevost, the governor and commander-in-chief, to Robert Dickson, who was appointed "Agent and Superintendent of the Western Nations," to whom it seems most extraordinary discretionary powers were granted.² On the 17th of April, Mr.

¹ See sketch of Boilvin, and his description of Prairie du Chien in 1811, *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xi., pp. 247-253. Dickson writes to Lawe, Feb. 4, 1814: "Boilvin and Jacrot have addressed two flaming Epistles to the people of the prairie — exhorting them to claim the protection of the great republic before it is too late," etc. — *Ibid.*, p. 290. — ED.

² See Cruikshank's sketch of Dickson, in *Id.*, xii., pp. 133 *et seq.*; also letters by that partisan, in *Id.*, x., xi., xii., and in Bulger Papers, *post.* — ED.