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(Lieut Charles Lee)

T H E
I M P O R T A N C E
O F
C A N A D A
C O N S I D E R E D.
I N T W O L E T T E R S
T O A
N O B L E L O R D.



L O N D O N :
Printed for R. and J. DODSLEY, in Pall-mall.
MDCCLXI.

T H E
I M P O R T A N C E
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C O N S I D E R E D.

M Y L O R D,

TH E conversation I lately had with your Lordship has encouraged me to declare my sentiments to you in writing on the same subject. I with more readiness venture on this task, as I am convinced that no great address is necessary, but only common sense and an impartial relation of facts, to prove beyond contradiction what I then advanced, *viz.* That unless we keep all Canada we keep nothing. This I think evincible by many reasons,

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but by none more strongly than what may perhaps at first sound like a paradox, *that the simple possession of Canada with the westward of the great lakes * can be of no consequence to the French.* Can we suppose that they would be desirous of this cession, that they would sacrifice any advantage to it in another part of the world, unless they had some farther views than the bare pleasure of being called Lords of Canada, or unless they were confident that they can by means of their influ-

* By the westward of the lakes, is not meant the westward of all the five great lakes, the Illinois river, the banks of the Mississippi, nor any part of Louisiana; but only so far west as was included in the same government with Canada, and which was surrendered to us by the capitulation of Montreal; *viz.* that Chersonesus which is formed by the lakes Ontario, Erie and Huron, Detroit and Michilimackinac, with the rivers Miamis and Vabash.

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ence over the Indians make what encroachments they please on our possessions? There are few instances, I take it, where the French in their treaties have been bubbled with things merely titular; they have generally secured to themselves something solid, or patch'd up terms speciously modest, but which they could break with impunity and advantage. That the possession of Canada simply, and the westward of the lakes, is merely titular, must appear to every man who will only cast his eye on the map of that country. He will there see that whoever possesses the dominion of lake Ontario and the pass at Niagara, must engross the whole furr trade. Niagara is the great and immediate mart for all those numerous tribes of Indians who inhabit the westward of the lakes, and whom we

comprehend under the general name of Uttawawas; the trade of Michilimakinac on the freights betwixt Huron and Michigan centers here, as likewise that of the lake Superior; for the other communication from Canada with these upper lakes by the Uttawa river, is rendered so difficult by its being frozen up for many months in the year, and its numerous rifts and cascades, that it does not answer the trouble and expence. It was this furr trade which enriched the inhabitants of Canada, and enabled them to purchase and make use of the manufactures of their mother country, which when they are totally deprived of, by what means they can make any profitable returns to France, or add to the revenue of its government, I confess I am not able to discover. As to their
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fishery on the banks of Newfoundland, and the mouth of the river St. Lawrence, I do not see that the possession of Quebec or Montreal relates to it, more than would the possession of Constantinople; at these places they cure no fish, and they are infinitely at too great a distance to be of any protection to the vessels employed in this business; Gaspe therefore or any little place on either side of the gulf, would be more important in regard to this article. As from these reasons it appears that Canada in itself would be of no consequence, but rather an incumbrance to France, I must repeat that I think it idle to imagine that they would insist on the cession of it, or indeed accept it, unless they entertained views of removing us from the dominion of the lakes, and were confident

fidest of their abilities to effect it. That this confidence is by no means visionary, must I think be obvious to every man who is the least acquainted with the nature of that country, the disposition of the Indians, and their method of making war: the Indians have no artillery, consequently fortifications will not stop them; they make war in small parties, from five or ten to an hundred, so that they could steal undiscovered into your country, though a chain of forts should be erected the distance of every half mile. Their baggage consists of only one blanket to each man, a small kettle to every squad, consisting perhaps of six or seven men, and ingredients to light a fire; accounted thus, we have innumerable instances of their having made expeditions of 1500, or 2000
2 miles

miles through the woods; they trust to their skill in hunting, and their knowledge of certain herbs and fruits for subsistence, and we have rarely any examples of their being lost for want of provisions; they will march sixty miles a day, or more, for many days together. When they enter a province, a certain tract is assigned to each respective party to be destroyed, which they accordingly lay waste, burn the houses, and butcher the inhabitants, but if they have time they carry off the children with them; they then return with inimitable speed through unknown paths, either home or to their general rendezvous; they there refresh themselves for some time, re-enter the province, assign other tracts which share the same fate with the former. There perhaps never was a
more

more exquisite piece of policy thought of, than this custom of carrying off the children, who being separated from their friends and relations, removed from all English objects, and not suffered by their masters even to speak their native tongue, become in a short time enamoured with their ranging independent kind of life, forget intirely all their former connections, and are savages to all intents and purposes; by these means the number of their enemy is decreased, their own augmented, and consequently their power. The Shawanese and Delawars might, I suppose, when they commenced hostilities against us, amount to six hundred fighting men ; they are now, I dare say, double that number, at least, if I may judge of the whole from what I was witness of, in one of their
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their towns upon the river Au Beuf; and if boys of fifteen and sixteen are allowed to be of the military age, I saw in that town alone more than an hundred Pensilvanian children, every individual of whom was so totally savagized, (if I may say so) that we could not extract a syllable of English from them. When we reflect on the horrible ravages these two nations (so trifling in their numbers) have committed in our colonies, we may, I think, form a proper idea of the dreadful light an Indian war ought to be considered in, how irresistible they are in their attacks, how secure from being attacked. Virginia, Maryland, Pensylvania and part of Jersey, from the Blue Mountains above one hundred miles in breadth and more than six hundred miles from north east to south west, one of the
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richest and most beautiful tracts of country in the universe, were rendered a continued desert by this handful of savages; four thousand of the inhabitants were massacred, and their children carried off, who may in time be acting the same tragedy on their native ground against their countrymen, and perhaps nearest relations; the most immense rivers were not able to put a stop to these furies; the Patomac and Susquahana were no bars to them, they passed them and repassed them daily with impunity; a slight raft made in a few moments, on which they may secure their arms and ammunition dry, is to them sufficient, as they are more expert in swimming, than what we have any conception of in Europe. At the same time they committed these devastations in our colonies, they har-
rassed

raised in so terrible a manner the communication to Fort Duquesne (on which we had generally four or five thousand troops employed) that in all probability it must have fallen in the year fifty nine, notwithstanding all the blood and money which was expended in the acquisition of it, had they not been diverted another way, by the investiture of Niagara, which was soon followed by the reduction of Quebec, and consequently a general peace with the Indians (those near Louisiana excepted) ensued, for over these the reduction of Canada has no influence, as their ammunition and other necessaries of life are drawn from the French settlements, which are extended in their vicinity from the Mississippi. Their security from attacks, consists in the prodigious tracts of wilderness betwixt

our habitations and theirs, which tho they can penetrate with ease and subsist, men who are not accustomed to this kind of life, would perish should they attempt. I am not ignorant that Armstrong of Pennsylvania did effectuate a march to Kintannon on the Ohio (the boldest and best planed enterprize which has been undertaken against the Indians) but what was the event? the enemy lost about ten fighting men, and our army was almost totally starved, dispersed or slaughtered. But their security from attacks does not consist alone in these intermediate deserts, but in the facility with which they can remove their habitations should we be able to penetrate them; for as their subsistence depends chiefly on hunting and shooting, a change of habitation is to them no great inconvenience, which

which to people who cultivate lands, would be no less than ruin. But to return from this digression, these wise gentry who dream of forming a frontier in America, mean I suppose (if they mean any thing) that we should retain at least, the forts on the south side of the lakes Ontario and Erie, viz. Oswego, Niagara, Presque Isle, the rivers Au Beuf and Ohio; a possibility of maintaining which against the inclinations of the Indians (from these advantages which they have over us) is certainly chimerical. By the Indians I here mean in particular the Six Nations or Iroquois. Oswego, on which all the other forts depend, is 248 miles from Schenectady, seventy of which upon the banks of the Mohock river are inhabited; but upon the least alarm of an enemy, they fly with their wives and children into
 little

little stockaded forts, which are erected for that purpose ; those who have been hardy enough to remain in their houses have been butchered without exception ; such is the situation of this communication for the space of seventy miles ; the rest (if we except lake Oneida, twenty-eight miles in length) is one continued defile, in any single part of which a body of men, tho' prepared for action, is liable to be cut off by an enemy not equal even to the third part of their own numbers ; what then must be the fate of those numerous loaded boats, which for the support of these forts must necessarily be continually passing thro' this defile (if a narrow river whose banks are either high scarped rocks, or covered with thick woods, may be called a defile?) what I say must be the fate of these
 2 boats,

boats, managed by men quite unprepared for action, their arms and ammunition generally wet, from the nature of their work? Will continual and numerous escorts, marching on the banks of the river, be proposed an expedient? The multitude of troops and prodigious expence this would require, would render it intolerable; besides the chain of forts which would be necessary for this end, would never be suffered by the Six Nations (who are the proprietors of the country through which this communication is carried) whilst they are an independent people; and independent they are, as long as there are two different European powers in America; that is to say, as long as they can be supplied with ammunition by one to act against the other. Was there only one power then they would
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be dependent, as the means of their carrying on war would be in the hands of that power alone. But it may perhaps be asked, what reasons there are to apprehend that these people, who were once our most steady friends and allies, should now be supposed to be inclined to act against us? There are indeed but too solid grounds for this apprehension; they formerly considered us in the light of a counterpoise to the power of the French, their ancient and natural enemies; but since the reduction of Quebec, they have considered us in a very different and less favourable light. It is unnecessary to enter into the particulars of our conduct the last year in the river St. Laurence, wherein they imagined themselves injured, but certain it is, they did imagine themselves injured, and

and certain it is, they glow with ardor for an opportunity to revenge these injuries, which, whether real or imaginary, I shall not pretend to determine. But supposing pique and resentment out of the question, would not their politics urge them to conspire against us? The Indians are a people who of all others abhor most the thoughts of being dependents; their natural sagacity, of which no race of men possess more, would dictate to them the necessity of expelling us from the dominion of the lakes, and reducing our power to an equality at least with that of the French; they would then be courted by both parties, and restored to their ancient importance. Of their power to effect this, we have a sufficient specimen in the calamities we have suffered from the

Shawanese and Delawars; nations extremely inferior both in numbers and reputation for war to the Irroquois, who are perfectly acquainted with every foot of land, every hollow, every advantageous pass on the communication thro' which this visionary frontier must be supported; visionary I must call it; and should we be unhappy enough to be deluded by this idle dream, the miserable consequences may be foretold, without being possessed of the spirit of divination; the instant these forts fall (which by being cut off from all the means of support must soon happen) the French will re-establish themselves firmly in the dominion of the lakes, pour daily fresh troops into Canada, and by strengthening and populating the communication betwixt the river St. Laurence and
Mississippi

Mississippi surround our colonies, which must end in our total expulsion from America.

P. S. That the disaffection of these Indians to us, is out of dispute, we have no less authority than their own declarations. The chief and speaker of the Oneidas did the last campaign, in the presence of many officers, make so strong and sensible remonstrances to several of the tribes on the absurdity of their conduct, in suffering the English scale to preponderate so beyond measure in America, that they were wrought upon (together with the disgust they had conceived from our treatment) to desert from us abruptly in one night, with the strongest marks of dissatisfaction and resentment.

L E T T E R II.

IT may seem a matter of surprize, that we have not cultivated the friendship of the Indians with more care and assiduity; undoubtedly, justice, honour, and self-interest demand it; but great allowances must be made to those who are strangers to the tempers, manners, and circumstances of this people, should they not succeed altogether in acquiring their good opinion. To treat Indians with propriety and address, is perhaps of all tasks the most difficult: to sooth them when they are angry, to keep them in temper when they are so, requires a long acquaintance with their singularities, and study of their disposition; it is likewise

wife necessary to flatter the notions which they entertain of their own importance and dignity, at the same time without stooping to any condescensions, which may give them reason to suspect you are influenced by dread of their power ; this would immediately beget their contempt. Their demands would then be endless and exorbitant, and their insolence beyond sufferance. But above all we should endeavour to acquire their entire confidence in our integrity, of which we must not wonder if they are suspicious ; for since our first intercourse with them, a most amazing and uninterrupted series of villainies have been practised on their simplicity by the traders, from whom they form their notions of the whole society. Some of the provincial governors have even been charged with being principal actors

tors in *this infamous scene* of knaveries, or at least conniving at them. These worthies have defeated the end of the government, by defrauding the Indians of the presents which were annually sent them with an intention to confirm the alliance, or in their style, to brighten the chain of friendship; nor have they confined themselves to these petty robberies; advantages have been taken of the violent passion the Indians have in general for rum, by which, when they have been purposely reduced to a degree of almost total insensibility, they have easily been prevailed upon to set their hands to grants of their most valuable grounds: when their intoxication has passed, and their reason returned, in vain did they exclaim against these iniquitous proceedings, their hands and seals were produced

duced as proofs of the validity of the purchase, and they might as effectually have howled to the wolves for redress, as to these righteous prefects. Such are the glorious advantages, which a civil and christian community may boast of possessing over the rude and untaught savages! This, I have been told, was the original cause of that fatal rupture with the Shawanese and Delawars, and an attempt of this nature was likewise made on the lands of our most steady and faithful friends the Mohawks, to whom the province of New York is obliged for its very existence, to whose activity and good offices we are indebted for the alliance, or more properly the neutrality of the other five nations thro' the whole course of this war; who in the days of our distress were the administrators of comfort, and
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in the day of our success the most sincere rejoicers. But the consideration of these merits it seems had little weight; a convenient moment was seized, when by the fumes of liquor they were deprived of the power of thinking, and a cession was obtained from them of the richest part of their territories; for this purpose I have heard a patent was prepared, by which the property of these brave and deserving allies was to be transferred to the hands of a grasping individual, but was prevented from taking place by the vigorous interposition of Sir William Johnson, who represented not only the injustice and infamy of such a measure, but the tragical consequences which might attend it. Had it taken place, in all probability these champions of our interest would have removed their habitations

to the river St. Laurence, from whence in conjunction with their brethren of Oswegatchi and Coknahwaga, they would have made most bloody and perpetual inroads into our helpless provinces. Our quarrel with the Mihi-kandas had the same origin; and from the events of that quarrel, we may form a judgment of what we should have suffered from the resentment of the Mohawks, had this iniquitous scheme been farther prosecuted. The Mihi-kandas are a tribe of Indians, who inhabited the most fertile and delightful spots, upon the banks of Hudson's river, situated several miles above Albany; who after having been deprived of their lands by these fraudulent means, and procuring no redress from their remonstrances, solemnly denounced eternal war against us, and retired to the

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river

river St. Francis, where they were received with open arms by the French ; and from that date of time until the reduction of Montreal, (by which they were rendered dependent on us,) they acted against us with a particular and implacable spirit of enmity. Scortico and Saratoga, two large and flourishing settlements, they reduced to ashes, and laid every thing waste to the gates of Albany.

From these repeated acts of treachery in individuals, the Indians, at least those who have had most commerce with us, have conceived a very indifferent opinion of the whole English nation, and from this diffidence of our integrity, they are apt to misconstrue our best intentions; and some misconstruction of this nature, was perhaps the cause of their abrupt desertion

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tion from us, immediately after the reduction of the Isle Royale in the river St. Laurence. It will therefore be necessary, by a future constant tenor of upright conduct towards them, to remove these ill impressions, which have been the main bars to any cordiality betwixt us, and rendered the management of them so difficult and precarious a task. We have numerous instances of the inconvenience and danger arising from this jealousy, which is not confined to a concern for their lands and property alone, but extends to apprehensions of personal danger. Of this the French have sometimes very artfully taken advantage. In the year 1755, Contre Cœur then governor of Fort du Quesne, was apprehensive that the Mingos and one of the three tribes

of Delawars intended to join General Braddock. This Frenchman had forfeited all title to the friendship of these Indians, but determined if possible to prevent their junction with us, by working upon their jealousy. He accordingly contrived by some of his emissaries, to propagate a rumour amongst them, that the preparations for war betwixt the French and English were not serious, but only a feint, by which they might lull the Indians into security, and then exterminate them, from the face of the earth, as enemies to mankind. This insinuation, there being at that time no formal declaration of war, was the more specious. The stratagem answered his purpose; for the tribe of Delawars stood entirely aloof, and but very few of the
Mingos

Mingos were prevailed upon to continue with us*. Numberless other instances, were it necessary, might be quoted, of the inconveniences and dangers which have arisen from this diffidence and jealousy; but neither their diffi-

* Scaroniadi the chief of the Mingos compared the powers of France and England, to the two blades of a pair of sheers, the Indians to a piece of cloth betwixt them. He observed that altho' the two edges of this instrument seemed to threaten each other in their approach, they would neither of them receive the least injury, but would cut the cloth in twain. And as a proof that their suspicions were not groundless, they accused the general of holding correspondence with Contre Cœur, and that in particular he had lately received a letter from him; which was really the case; it was a paper of foolish gasconades, imperiously threatening the English with the severest chastisement, should they presume to approach his master's territories. This paper the general immediately produced, explained the contents, and delivered it into the hands of the chief, desiring that if he was still suspicious of his veracity, he would procure a farther explanation of it from the interpreters. The Indian was so struck with this candid and open proceeding, that the instant he

diffidence, nor even any resentment which they may harbour against us, for real or imaginary injuries, are, politically speaking, matters of very serious concern to us at present, whilst we are in possession of all Canada: but should

he received the letter he tore it to pieces and stamp'd upon it, declaring himself satisfied, and that it was impossible the great King of England should employ as his war captain a man who could be guilty of the meanness of lying, a vice peculiar to cowards. This Indian was ever after most steadily attached to us, and upon the death of Hendric became the leading man of the Six Nations. Not many days after this interview, he exhibited a most remarkable proof of his fidelity and attachment: he was taken prisoner by a party of French and their Indians, who bound him to a tree, and threatened him with immediate torture, unless he solemnly renounced all connection with the English. He laughed at their threats, and singing the glories of his own achievements, and the power and greatness of the English nation, defy'd their tortures, and in this situation he was rescued by his own son, with a party of chosen runners. This young warrior was afterwards most unfortunately killed in a mistake, by a provincial soldier, as he was returning from Fort du Quesne with intelligence.

we restore a single acre of that country, by which they would be repossessed of the means of acting against us, our prospect would be dreadful indeed. A general confederacy I am persuaded would be immediately formed betwixt the Ohio Indians, and the upper Five Nations; for I will suppose the constancy and fidelity of the Mohawks are not by any consideration to be moved. To this confederacy, those tribes inhabiting the banks of the lakes Huron, Erie, and Ontario, must of necessity accede, as Niagara and Oswego, from whence they draw all their necessaries of life, would soon fall from our hands, by being cut off from the means of support in the manner I have already explained*.

As

* The tribes here meant consist of Hurons, Wyandots, Puttawatamies, Uttawas, Chippawawas and Mesiasagas.

As an illustration of the necessity which these tribes would be under of acting against us, should we be dispossessed of the dominion of the lakes, I shall only insert the words of one of their Sachems, when he presented the calumet of peace to us at Niagara. They were to this effect. *My name is Waybukcumigut, I am chief and captain of the Messasagas, a nation that has ever been at war with the English. I confess we have laid your fairest provinces waste, that we have slaughtered your men and your women, and your children we have made captives; but do not attribute this to any particular antipathy we have to you, or any partiality and attachment to the French. If you would search for the real causes of our proceedings, cast your eyes on the map; you will there see, that whoever*

is in possession of this strong castle of Niagara, must effectually command the Messasagas, and may dictate to them what measures they think proper. From hence we are supplied with the very means of our subsistence, for we have now been so long diffused to bows and arrows, the weapons of our ancestors, that without ammunition we cannot subsist. The French were sensible of this our state of dependency, and accordingly they treated us, as if the Great Spirit had not created us of the same species with themselves; we groaned under their yoke, but had only this alternative to chuse; either implicitly to obey their commands, or perish thro' famine with our wives and children. We have now changed our masters, for our masters we must acknow-

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ledge you to be, and we believe you to be a better and more generous people than they are; we hope we shall find you so; on our parts we promise that you shall experience in us most faithful and obedient subjects; no danger shall approach you from any quarter, but we will give you timely notice, that you may avoid it; and the tears which we have raised in your eyes, we will wash away with the blood of your perfidious enemies; but should the French be ever restored to the possession of this castle, and you should hear that the Messasagas have resumed the war hatchet against you, do not accuse them of perfidy, but lay the blame on your own folly and stupidity.

But it may perhaps be said, that notwithstanding the confederacy of the Indians should be general, our colo-

nies can furnish such an immense superiority of numbers, that in the end we might be victorious. I have already observed, that Indians depend chiefly for their subsistence on hunting and shooting, that we depend on the settlement and cultivation of lands ; the advantage this gives them over us is infinite and obvious ; this indeed it is which renders them invincible ; as long as their vast forests are furnished with variety of game, and their numerous rivers with fish, they cannot be distressed for provision ; these are inexhaustible magazines, which nothing but a general deluge can destroy ; should any of the habitations be surprized and demolished, of what importance would it be, as they can remove with so much facility to ano-

ther spot, and enjoy all the benefits they did in the former? How different is the case of those who cultivate lands? The demolition of their crops and habitations, and effectual ruin, is to them one and the same thing. But are we inferior to them in courage and discipline? Cannot we meet them in the field, and crush them by the force of our arms? They will not meet us in the field; they will not make war upon the armed and prepared, but elude them, (which the nature of the country, and their inimitable swiftness renders a very easy task,) and make war on the unarmed and unprepared, They will content themselves with cutting off our escorts in advantageous defiles, with ruining our communications, and laying waste our provinces.

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How effectually, with what security; they are able to accomplish these ends, our war with the Shawanefe and Delawars may suffice to convince us, through the whole course of which, the loss on their side did not amount to thirty men, on ours (inhabitants included) seven thousand. Thus have I endeavoured to explain and illustrate by a relation of facts, the circumstances which constitute the superiority, which the Indians have over us: I shall now only beg leave to repeat, that we have the strongest reasons to think, their inclinations are ripe for acting universally against us, that they only wait for means to execute their project, that the cession of any part of Canada would furnish them with these means, that the re-establishment of the
French

French in the dominion of the lakes, and the total destruction of our colonies, even to the gates of our sea port towns, would certainly follow, and consequently, that all the blood and treasure which has been expended in the prosecution of this war, might be considered as expended in vain.

T H E E N D.