

FORBES' EXPEDITION.†

IN 1758 the French, being disheartened by the British success elsewhere, and their force at Duquesne weak, it was determined by the English government to make an effort to draw the Western Indians, and thereby still further to weaken the force that would oppose General Forbes' army, which was now on the eve of starting for Fort Duquesne.

POST'S MISSION.

It was no easy matter, however, to find a true and trustworthy man whose courage, skill, ability, knowledge and physical powers would fit him for such a mission. He was to pass through a wilderness filled with doubtful friends, into a country filled with open enemies. The whole French interest would be against him, and the Indians of the Ohio were little to be trusted. Every stream on his way had been dyed with blood; every hillside had rung with the death yell, and grown red in the light of burning huts. The man who was at last chosen was a Moravian, who had lived among the savages seventeen years, and married among them. His name, Christian Frederick Post. Of his journey, sufferings and doings, his own journal is the evidence, though Heckwelder says that those parts which redound most to his own credit he omitted when printing it.

He left Philadelphia upon the 15th of July, 1758, and against the protestations of Yeedyuscung, who said he would surely lose his life, proceeded up the Susquehanna, passing "many plantations deserted and laid waste." Upon the 7th of August he came to the *Allegheny*, opposite French creek, and was forced to pass under the very eyes of the garrison of Fort Venango, but was not molested.

From Venango he went to "Kushkushkee," which was on or near Big Beaver creek. "This place," he says, "contained ninety houses and two hundred able warriors." At this place Post had much talk with the chiefs, who seemed well disposed, but somewhat afraid of the French. The great conference, however, it was determined should be held opposite Fort Duquesne, where there were Indians of eight nations. The messenger was at first unwilling to go thither, fearing the French would seize him, but the savages said "they would carry him in their bosom, he need fearing nothing," and they well redeemed this promise. On the 24th of August, Post, with his Indian friends, reached the point opposite the fort, and immediately followed a series of speeches, explanations and agreements which are found in his journal.

At first he was received rather hardly by an old and deaf Onondage, who claimed the land whereon they stood as belonging to the Six Nations; but a Delaware rebuked him in no very polite terms. "That man speaks not as a man," he said, "he endeavors to frighten us by saying this ground is his. He dreams. He and his father (the French) have certainly drank too much liquor – they are drunk; pray let them go to sleep till they are sober. You do not know what your own nation does at home, how much they have to say to the English. You do nothing but smoke your pipe here. Go to sleep with your father, and when you are sober, we will speak to you."

It was clear that the Delawares, and indeed all the western Indians, were wavering in their affection for the French, and though some opposition was made to the union with the Colonists, the general feeling produced by the prospect of a quick approach of Forbes' army, and by the truth and kindness of Post himself, was in favor of England. The Indians, however, complained bitterly of the disposition which the whites showed in claiming and seizing their lands.

"Why did you not fight your battles at home, or on the sea, instead of coming into our Country to fight them?" they asked again and again, and were mournful when they thought of the future. "*Your* heart is good," they said to Post. "*You* speak sincerely; but we know there is always a great number who wish to get rich; they have enough. Look! we do not want to be rich, and take away what others have. The white people think we have no brains in our heads – that they are big and we a little handful – but remember, when you hunt for a rattle snake you cannot find it, and perhaps it will bite you before you see it."

When the war of Pontiac came, this saying might have been justly remembered. At length having concluded a peace, Post turned toward Philadelphia, setting out on the 9th of September, and, after the greatest sufferings and perils from French scouts and Indians, reached the settlements uninjured.

† Western Annals.