1. Washington was then a land-surveyor, barely of age ; but he was the agent whom Dinwiddie selected to carry an ultimatum to the French at Presque Isle. After a perilous winter passage through the wilderness, he found that the French had no intention of evacuating their posi­tions, and returned. Virginia at once (January 1754) voted money and men to maintain the western claims of the colonies ; and Washington was sent with 400 provincial troops to secure the half-built fort at the head of the Ohio. The French were also pushing for that place. They won in the race, drove away the English workmen, and finished Fort Du Quesne, named after their governor. Washington, compelled to stop and fortify his position, won the first skirmish of the war with the French advanced guard, but was forced to surrender on terms (July 4, 1754). The usual incidents of a general Indian warfare followed for the rest of the year.
2. Both Governments began to ship regular troops to America, though there was no formal declaration of war until 1756. The year 1755 was marked by the surprise and defeat of Braddock, a gallant and opinionated British officer who commanded an expedition against Fort Du Quesne, by the complete conquest of Nova Scotia, and by the defeat of the French, under their principal officer, Dieskau, at Lake George, in New York, by a force of pro­vincial troops under Sir William Johnson. In 1756 the greatest of French Canadian governors, Montcalm, arrived ; and the tide of war went steadily against the English. The officers sent out by the home Government were incom­petent, and they generally declined to draw on the colonists for advice. Montcalm found them an easy prey ; and his lines were steadily maintained at the point where they had been when Washington surrendered at Fort Necessity. Pitt’s entrance to the Newcastle ministry (June 1757) changed all this. For the first time the colonies found a man who showed a sympathy with them and a willingness to use them. Their legislatures were summoned into counsel as to the conduct of the war ; and their alacrity in response was an augury of a change in its fortune. Incompetent officers were weeded out, with little regard to family or court influence. The whole force of the colonies was gathered up, and in 1758 was launched at the French. All western New York was cleared of the enemy at a blow ; Fort Du Quesne was taken and renamed Fort Pitt ; Louisburgh, which had been restored to France at Aix-la-Chapelle, was again taken ; and the only failure of the year was the dreadful butchery of the English in assaulting the walls of Ticonderoga. Louisburgh made an excellent point of attack against Quebec, and Montcalm was forced to draw off nearly all his troops elsewhere for the defence of his principal post. The year 1759 was therefore begun by the capture of Ticonderoga and almost all the French posts within the present United States, and was crowned by Wolfe’s capture of the towering walls of Quebec. In 1760, while George II. lay dying, the con­quest of Canada was completed, and the dream of a great French empire in North America disappeared for ever.
3. The war continued through the first three years of George III., and the colonies took part in the capture of Havana after Spain had entered the struggle as an ally of France. The peace of Paris, which put an end to the war, restored Havana to Spain, in exchange for Florida, which now became English. France retired from North America, giving to Spain all her claims west of the Mississippi and that small portion east of the Mississippi which surrounds New Orleans, and to England the remainder of the con­tinent east of the Mississippi. Spain retained for her territory the name of Louisiana, originally given by the French. The rest of the continent was now “ the English colonies of North America.”
4. It is evident now that the French and Indian war was the prelude to the American revolution. It trained the officers and men for the final struggle. It released the colonies from the pressure of the French in Canada so suddenly that the consciousness of their own strength came at the same instant with the removal of the ancient barrier to it. It united the colonies for the first time *; few* things are more significant of the development of the colonies than the outburst of plans for colonial union between 1748 and 1755, the most promising, though it finally failed, being that of Franklin (1754) at the Albany con­ference of Indian commissioners from the various colonies. The practical union of the colonies, however, was so evident that it might have been foreseen that they would now unite instinctively against any common enemy, even the mother country.
5. The war, too, while it obtained its main object in the view of the colonies—an unlimited western expansion,— brought the seeds of enmity between them and the crown. The claims of the English on the continent, as has been said, were based on the voyages of the Cabots. Under them the crown had granted in the charters of Massa­chusetts, Connecticut, Virginia, North and South Carolina, and Georgia a western extension at first to the Pacific Ocean and finally to the Mississippi. This was what the colonies had fought for ; and yet at the end of the war (1763) a royal proclamation was issued forbidding present land sales west of the Alleghanies and practically reserving the conquered territory as a crown domain. In this, if in nothing else, lay the seeds of the coming revolution, as it afterwards almost disrupted the rising Union. The war had welded the thirteen colonies into one people, though they hardly dreamed of it yet ; they had an underlying consciousness that this western territory belonged to the new people, not to the crown or to the separate colonies which had charter claims to it ; and they would have resisted the claims of the crown as promptly as they after­wards resisted the claims of the individual colonies.
6. Finally, the war broke the feeling of dependence on the mother country. Poorly armed, equipped, and dis­ciplined, the colonial or “ provincial ” troops had certainly shown fighting qualities of no mean order. Colonists would not have been disposed, under any circumstances, to underrate the military qualities of their own men, but their self-glorification found a larger material because of the frequently poor quality of the officers who were sent through family and court influence to represent Great Britain in the colonies. The bitter words in which Junius refers to British military organization in after years were certainly even more applicable in 1750; and the incom­petency of many of the British officers is almost incompre­hensible. Its effects were increased by an utter indiffer­ence to the advice of colonial leaders which, in a new and unknown country, was certain to place British soldiers again and again in positions where they appeared to great disadvantage alongside of their colonial allies or rivals. The provincial who had stood his ground, firing from behind trees and stumps, while the regulars ran past him in headlong retreat, came home with a sense of his own innate superiority which was sure to bring its results. Braddock’s defeat was the prologue to Bunker Hill. The results were strengthened by the fact that most of the war was fought either in New England, the most democratic of the colonies, or by New England men. Their leaders had always been sought for by annual popular elections and re-elections, the promotion of approved men, and the retention of men of poorer quality in lower grades of office. To them the aristocratic influences which gave place and power to such men as Loudoun and “ Mrs Nabbycrombie ” were simply ridiculous, and marked only an essential