

circumstances connected with their first intercourse with Europeans, tending to show that it had subsisted about a century at the era of Dutch discovery; on the other hand, their principal traditions indicate a period far more remote.

After the formation of the League, the Iroquois rose rapidly in power and influence. It gave them additional strength by concentration of effort; a constant increase of numbers by the unity of the race; and a firmer establishment, through their more ample means for self-protection and foreign conquest. One of the first results of their federal system was a universal spirit of aggression; a thirst for military glory and political aggrandizement, which made the old forests of America resound with human conflicts from New England to the Mississippi, and from the northern confines of the great lakes to the Tennessee and the hills of Carolina. Unrecorded, except by tradition, is the narrative of the warlike achievements of this gifted and progressive race, who raised themselves, through the vicissitudes of incessant strife, to a general and acknowledged supremacy over these boundless territories. Without considering the terrible and ferocious characteristics of Indian warfare, it must be admitted that the empire which they reared over Indian nations, furnishes no slight evidence of their hardihood, courage and sagacity.

With the first consciousness of rising power, they turned their long-cherished resentment upon the Adirondacks, who had oppressed them in their in-

fancy as a nation, and had expelled them from their country, in the first struggle for the ascendancy. This war raged for a long time with unceasing animosity, and was continued nearly fifty years after the commencement of French occupation, until the descendants of the ancient Adirondacks were almost totally extirpated. At the era of French discovery (1535), the latter nation appear to have been dispossessed of their original country, and driven down the St. Lawrence as far as Quebec. When Jaques Cartier first ascended this river in 1535, the country about Quebec was in the possession of a people speaking the Algonquin language, doubtless the Adirondacks, while the site of Montreal was occupied by a nation speaking the Huron tongue, of which the language of the Iroquois is a branch. After the permanent occupation of Canada by the French, in 1607, the Adirondacks became their allies; but the protection of the former was insufficient to shield them against the hostile visitations of their hereditary enemy.

A new era commenced with the Iroquois upon the establishment of the Dutch trading-post at Orange, now Albany, in 1615. The principal Indian nations upon the north were the Hurons and Adirondacks; upon the west, the Eries, Neuter Nation, Miamis, Ottawas, and Illinois; upon the south, the Shawnees, Cherokees, Catawbias, Susquehannocks, Nanticokes, Delawares, and some lesser tribes; and upon the east, the Minsi and New England Indians. Some of these nations had been subdued

and made tributary. At this time, the Iroquois had grown up into a populous and powerful confederacy and were rapidly advancing to a general supremacy in the north-eastern section of the continent. No Indian race east of the Mississippi had reached such a position of authority and influence, or were bound together by such enduring institutions. Firmly established upon the territory of New York, and above the danger of displacement from adjacent nations, they had already entered upon that career of conquest, which they afterwards prosecuted with such signal success.

Friendly relations were established between the Iroquois and the Dutch, which continued without interruption until the latter surrendered their possessions upon the Hudson to the English, in 1664. During this period, a trade sprang up between them in furs, which the Iroquois exchanged for European fabrics, but more especially for firearms, in the use of which they were afterwards destined to become so expert. The English, in turn, cultivated the same relations of friendship which had been commenced with them by the Dutch. A "covenant chain" was established between them, which the Iroquois, with singular fidelity, preserved unbroken, until the independence of the American states terminated the jurisdiction of the English over the country.

It was otherwise, however, with the French. From the first to the last, they encountered the uncompromising and inveterate enmity of the League. As early as 1609, Champlain, having ascended

through the lake which now bears his name into lake George, accompanied by the Adirondacks, fell in with a war-party of the Mohawks, numbering about two hundred, and an engagement ensued between them on the western shore of the lake. This was the first battle between the Iroquois and the Europeans, and the first time the former heard the sound of firearms, by the marvellous power of which they were then easily vanquished. The French having allied themselves with the Adirondacks and Hurons, given them arms and assistance, and incited them against the Iroquois, a spirit of hatred was aroused against them, which never ceased to burn until the final subjugation of Canada by the English, in 1760. Besides this alliance with their ancient enemies, the French were more inclined to resort to intimidation in their intercourse with the Iroquois, than to conciliation and forbearance. In addition to these errors of policy, was the deep and abiding interest taken by the latter in the country about Montreal, which in ancient times had been the home of their fathers, which had been the theatre of their first military success, and which they had long continued to hold by the slender tenure of Indian conquest. As the rival colonies of France and England were for many years nearly equally balanced, the enmity and power of the Hode'nosau-nee were sufficient to turn the scale against the former. To this Indian League, France must chiefly ascribe the final overthrow of her magnificent schemes of colonization in the northern part of America.

With the possession of firearms commenced not only the rapid elevation, but absolute supremacy of the Iroquois over other Indian nations. In 1643, they expelled the Neuter Nation from the Niagara peninsula, and established a permanent settlement at the mouth of that river. They nearly exterminated, in 1653, the Eries, who occupied the south side of lake Erie and from thence east to the Genesee, and thus possessed themselves of the whole area of western New York, and the northern part of Ohio. About the year 1670, after they had finally completed the dispersion and subjugation of the Adirondacks and Hurons, they acquired possession of the whole country between lakes Huron, Erie and Ontario, and of the north bank of the St. Lawrence, to the mouth of the Ottawa river, near Montreal. On the north shore of lake Ontario they founded several villages, in the nature of colonial towns, to maintain possession of the conquered territory.

They also made constant inroads upon the New England Indians, who, after their partial subjugation by the English, were unable to cope with the formidable Iroquois. About the year 1670, they compelled them to break up many of their settlements, and flee for safety and protection to the borders of the English plantations. The name of the Iroquois had then become a terror among Indian nations. "I have been told," (says Colden) "by old men in New England, who remembered the time when the Mohawks made war on their Indians,

that as soon as a single Mohawk was discovered in their country, their Indians raised a cry from hill to hill, a Mohawk! a Mohawk! upon which they fled like sheep before wolves, without attempting to make the least resistance."

In 1680, the Senecas with six hundred warriors invaded the country of the Illinois, upon the borders of the Mississippi, while La Salle was among the latter, preparing to descend that river to the sea. So great was the dread and consternation of the Illinois, that they were inclined to abandon their villages, and retire from the country, to escape the fury of the conquering foe. At various times, both before and after this period, the Iroquois turned their warfare against the Cherokees upon the Tennessee, and the Catawbias in South Carolina, frequently returning from their distant expeditions with numerous captives, to grace the narrative of their invasions. Of these inroads they still preserve many traditions. All the intermediate country between the Alleghany and the Tennessee acknowledged their authority, and the latter river became their southern boundary. War parties of the League also made irruptions into the country of the Miamis, others penetrated into the peninsula of Michigan, and still others were seen upon the distant shores of lake Superior. No distant solitude, or rugged fastness was too obscure or difficult to escape their visitation; no enterprise was too perilous, no fatigue too great for their courage and endurance. The

fame of their achievements resounded over the continent.

On the south-east, also, they extended their conquests. As early as 1607, Captain John Smith, the founder of Virginia, encountered a band of the Iroquois, in several canoes, upon the upper part of the Chesapeake bay, then on their way to the territories of the Powhattan confederacy. The Shawnees, Susquehannocks, Nanticokes, Unamis, Delawares and Minsi, were vanquished one after another, and reduced to the condition of dependent nations. Even the Canarse Indians, in their sea-girt home upon Long Island, found no protection against their attacks. In fact, they traversed the whole country from the St. Lawrence to the Tennessee, and from the Atlantic to the Mississippi.

For about a century, from the year 1600 to the year 1700, the Iroquois were involved in an almost uninterrupted warfare. At the close of this period, they had subdued and held in nominal subjection all the principal Indian nations occupying the territories which are now embraced in the states of New York, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, the northern and western parts of Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky, Northern Tennessee, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, a portion of the New England states, and the principal part of Upper Canada. Over these nations, the haughty and imperious Iroquois exercised a constant supervision. If any of them became involved in domestic difficulties, a delegation of chiefs went among them and restored

tranquillity, prescribing at the same time their future conduct. Some of these nations, like the Delawares, they prohibited from going out to war, having denationalized them by taking from them all civil powers. According to the Indian notion, they were made women, and were henceforth to confine themselves to pursuits appropriate to the Indian female. Such was the general awe and fear inspired by their warlike achievements, that they dictated to Indian nations their own terms of intercourse, and insisted upon the fulfilment of their requirements. In the conquered territories they often established settlements or colonies of their own people, to exercise a species of superintendence over their acquired possessions.

The multitude of independent tribes into which the generic stocks of the continent had become subdivided, and their want of concert and unity, were extremely favorable to the career of conquest pursued by the Iroquois. In their disunited condition, they could but feebly resist the concentrated energies secured to the latter through the League.

About the year 1700, the Iroquois reached their culminating point. They had reared a colossal Indian empire, so far as its sway over the aborigines was concerned, and in comparison with any Indian power which had risen north of the Aztec monarchy. Having established their dominion securely against all races of Indian lineage, and strengthened the bonds of union among themselves

beyond the power of civil dissensions, they would seem to have prepared themselves for a still higher progress, through the pursuits of peace; but a different and more deadly enemy than the Indian had already stretched out its arms to enfold them in its withering embrace.

During the same period, or rather from about the year 1640 to the year 1700, a constant warfare was maintained between the Iroquois and the French, interrupted occasionally by negotiations and brief intervals of peace. As the former possessed both banks of the St. Lawrence, and the circuits of lakes Erie and Ontario, they intercepted the fur trade, which the French were anxious to maintain with the western nations. Upon this trade much of the prosperity of the new colony depended, for it furnished the chief article of export, and yielded the most profitable returns. But the war parties of the League ranged through these territories so constantly, that it was impossible for the French to pass in safety through the lakes, or even up the St. Lawrence above Montreal. Their traders were captured, and the rich furs of the west not only became the spoil of the victors, but the traders themselves were often led into captivity, and perhaps to the stake. So great was the fear of these sudden attacks, that both the traders and the missionaries were obliged to ascend the Ottawa river to near its source, and from thence to cross over to the Sault St. Marie, and the shores of lake Superior. For these reasons the French were extremely anxious, either

to detach the Iroquois from the English and gain their alliance, or to reduce them to subjection by conquest. They tried each successively, and in both were equally defeated. The untractable and politic Iroquois were averse to the former, and too powerful for the latter. On numerous occasions the ambassadors of the League were at Montreal and Quebec, to negotiate with them for the adjustment of difficulties, and the exchange of prisoners; in some of which negotiations, the terms of a peace, or at least of an armistice, were agreed upon; but these respites from warfare were of short duration. The ravages committed upon the settlements of the French were so frequent and so devastating, as to place the colony in imminent peril. But for the constant supplies from the mother country, the French power in Canada would inevitably have been overthrown at several different periods prior to 1700.

To retaliate for these frequent inroads, and to prevent their recurrence, the country of the Iroquois was often invaded by the French. On several occasions they drew out the whole force of the colony, to devastate the villages of the League; but after the most toilsome expeditions into the heart of the wilderness of New York, they returned without having accomplished sufficient to reward them for the fatigues and perils of the enterprise. The Iroquois invariably retired into the depths of the forest, leaving nothing but their deserted tenements and fields of corn to await the invader. In this man-

ner the unwearied perseverance and indomitable courage of the French were rendered futile against such an evanescent adversary.

In 1665, M. Courcelles, governor of Canada, led a strong party into the country of the Mohawks; but the hardships they encountered rendered it necessary for them to return, without accomplishing their purpose. The next year, M. De Tracy, viceroy of New France, with 1200 French and 600 Indians, renewed the invasion with better success. He captured *Te-ä-ton-ta-lo'-ga*, one of the principal villages of the Mohawks, situated at the mouth of the Schoharie creek; but after destroying the town, and the stores of corn, which they found in caches, they were obliged to retire without meeting an opposing force. Again, in 1684, M. De La Barre, then governor of Canada, entered the country of the Onondagas with about 1800 men. Having reached Hungry bay, on the east shore of lake Ontario, a conference was had with a delegation of Iroquois chiefs, headed by Garangula, the celebrated Onondaga orator. After they had exchanged recriminations and mutual defiance, a species of armistice was finally agreed upon, and thus the expedition ended.

A more successful enterprise was projected and carried into execution, in 1687, by M. De Nonville, then governor of Canada. Having raised a force of 2000 French and 600 Indians, he embarked them in a fleet of 200 bateaux, and as many birch bark canoes. After coasting lake Ontario from Kingston to Irondequoit bay, in the territory of

the Senecas, he landed at the head of this bay, and found himself within a few miles of the principal villages of the Senecas, which were then in the counties of Ontario and Monroe. The nearest village was *Gä-o-sä-ga'-o*, near Victor, in the county of Ontario, and the next *Gä-nun-dä'-gwa*, at the foot of the Canandaigua lake. Taking the trail which led directly to these villages, De Nonville marched upon the first. After repulsing a body of 500 Senecas, with whom he had a sharp engagement, he took and destroyed the town, which had been deserted by its inhabitants. Meeting with no further opposition, as the Senecas had retired into the interior, he marched southward as far as *Da-yo-de-hok'-to*, a village situated at the bend of the Honeoye outlet, west of Mendon, in the county of Monroe. This was the largest village of the Senecas, according to the official statement of De Nonville, and was the place selected for the execution of the *acté*, by which they took formal possession of the country of the Seneca-Iroquois, in the name of France. Four villages, with their extensive fields of corn then growing, were burned and devastated, after which the French army retired.

To retaliate for this invasion, a formidable party of the Iroquois, in the fall of the same year, made a sudden descent upon fort Chambly, on the Sorel river, near Montreal. Unable to capture the fort, which was resolutely defended by the garrison, they ravaged the settlements adjacent, and returned with a number of captives. About the same time, a

party of 800 attacked Frontenac, on the site of Kingston, and destroyed and laid waste the plantations and establishments of the French without the fortification. In July of the ensuing year, the French were made to feel still more sensibly the power of their revenge. A band of 1200 warriors, animated with the fiercest resentment, made a descent upon the island of Montreal. They had covered their plans with such secrecy, and advanced with such celerity, that the inhabitants had no admonition of their approach. Their first intimation of impending danger was the fearful onset of the Iroquois. Unprepared, and without the means of resistance, they were overpowered and slain in every direction. All that were without the fortifications fell under the rifle or the relentless tomahawk. Their houses were burned, their plantations ravaged, and the whole island covered with desolation. About a thousand of the French, according to some writers, perished in this invasion, or were carried into captivity. When the work of destruction was completed, the Iroquois retired, bearing with them the spoils of the island, and about 200 prisoners.

Overwhelmed by this sudden disaster, the French destroyed their forts at Niagara and Frontenac, and thus yielded the whole country west of Montreal to the possession of the Iroquois. At this critical period Count Frontenac again became governor of Canada, and during the short residue of his life, devoted himself, with untiring energy, to restore its

declining prosperity. War had now commenced between the English and French, which drew his first attention to the defence of Quebec against the attack of the English; but after this had been successfully resisted, he again sought to chastise the fierce enemy, who had so long disputed with the French the possession of Canada. In the winter of 1692, he sent a detachment of 600 French and Indians against the Mohawks; which, after travelling through the dense forests upon snow-shoes, and encountering almost insurmountable obstacles, finally reached in safety the vicinity of the Mohawk villages. They surprised and captured three of these, took three hundred prisoners, and returned with the loss of thirty men. Again, in 1696, Count Frontenac conducted an expedition in person against the Onondagas and Oneidas, with a thousand French and as many Indians. Having ascended the St. Lawrence in *bateau* and bark canoes, he coasted the eastern shore of the lake, to the mouth of the Oswego river. From thence he marched to the salt springs, near the site of Syracuse, and up the Onondaga valley to the principal village of the Onondagas. He found it, as usual, deserted, although fortified with palisades, and supplied with stores of corn. The village was then burned, and the growing corn, which was found in great abundance in the fields adjacent, was cut down with the sabre. A detachment was then sent against the Oneidas, under M. De Vaudreuil, by whom their fields also were laid waste, after which the French army returned to Canada.

This was the last French invasion of the territories of the Iroquois. A general peace soon followed, and continued without interruption, until the war of 1755, which finally resulted in the conquest of Canada by the English, in 1760.

From the commencement of English intercourse with the Iroquois, down to the independence of the American states, the covenant of friendship between them remained unbroken. The importance of conciliating this powerful confederacy was fully appreciated by the colonial authorities, especially during the infancy of the English establishments. Unwearied pains were taken by them to secure and retain their favor and confidence. Each successive governor announced his arrival to the Sachems of the League, and invited them to meet him in council, at an early day, to renew the "covenant chain." Each new alliance was cemented by presents, by mutual professions of kindness, and by assurances of mutual assistance. An intercourse sprang up between them in matters of trade, and in public affairs, which continued to increase, until councils with the Iroquois became nearly as frequent as the sessions of the provincial legislature. Independent of the profitable trade in furs, with which they enriched their commerce, they felt the necessity of interposing the power of the Indian League, as a barrier to French progress, not only towards their own settlements, but also towards the west. The French were constantly striving to open an extensive fur trade with the western nations, and for its necessary protection, to extend

their possessions up the St. Lawrence, and upon the northern shores of lake Ontario. With the exclusive navigation of this river and lake, they would have obtained nearly the absolute control of this important trade; under the powerful stimulus of which, the strength and prosperity of the French colony would have risen with such rapidity, as to threaten the security of the English possessions. Both the English and the French were fully aware of the important part the Iroquois were destined to bear in the drama of colonization; but the former, by their superior advantage of position, and from their greater dependence upon the forbearance of the League, were induced to pursue a course of policy which gained their unchangeable friendship. The French would inevitably, if unopposed by them, have possessed themselves of the greater part of New York, and, perhaps, have established their empire so firmly, that the united forces of the English colonies would have been unable to effect their displacement. At one period, the French had pushed their settlements up lake Champlain, until both sides of the lake, as far up as the foot of lake George, were covered with French grants.

A reference, at least, to the missionary efforts of the French, while in the occupation of Canada, ought not to be omitted. While the English entirely neglected the spiritual welfare of the Indians, the French were unremitted in their efforts to spread Christianity among them. The privations, and hardships endured by the Jesuit missionaries, and the zeal,

west, as its base. Following the course of these numerous streams from the north-east and north-west, these several trails converged upon Tioga, and descending the Susquehanna, formed the Great Southern trail, or highway of travel and migration into the south. The trails upon the Iroquois lakes, which lay north and south, in a measure connected the Central with the Susquehanna trail. Within this triangle were seated the Mohawk, Oneida, Tuscarora, Onondaga, Cayuga, and a part of the Seneca Nations.

These trails running upon the banks of the rivers, which are the highways fashioned by the hand of nature, need not be minutely traced, as they followed the windings of the streams. A trail descended the Conhocton river, *Gä-hä'-to*, to Tioga, *Tä-yä'-oga*. The convergence of so many trails upon this point, preparatory to a descent upon the south, through Pennsylvania, and into Virginia on the west side of the Blue Ridge, rendered it an important and well-known locality among the Iroquois.

From Tioga there were two trails up the Susquehanna, *Gä-wa-no-wä'-nä*. That upon the north bank ascending the river, passed over the site of Owego, *Ah-wa'-ga*, forded the Chenango, *O-che-näng'*, near its mouth, and passing over the site of Binghampton, *O-che-näng'*, continued up the river to the junction of the Unadilla, *De-u-na-dil'-lo*, where it intersected the trail coming down from the Oneida country. Continuing up the Susquehanna to the junction of the Charlotte river, the trail branched.

One ascended to the junction of the Cherry Valley creek, and following up this creek, finally passed over to Canajoharie. The other trail, having ascended the Charlotte river to its head, crossed over to the Cobuskill, *As-ca-le'-ge*, and descended that stream to the Schoharie creek, where it intersected the Schoharie trail, from the lower castle of the Mohawks. From Schoharie, *Ose-ko-har'-lä*, a branch trail turned up Foxes creek, and crossing the Helderberg hills, descended to Albany. Another branch leaving the Schoharie, crossed the town of Middleburg to the Caatskill river, and descended that river to the Hudson.

Many of the early settlers of middle Pennsylvania, and nearly all of our people who located themselves on the fertile tracts spread out upon the Susquehanna, entered the country upon these trails, which were the only roads opened through the forest. They trusted entirely for their route to the well-beaten, well-selected trails of the Iroquois. The same observation applies to the central trail, which, before the opening of regular roads, was traversed by the early pioneers of western New York, with their horses, cattle, and implements of husbandry. For many years this trail was the only route of travel. It guided the early immigrants into the heart of the country, and not a little were they indebted to the Iroquois for thus making their country accessible.

There were also regular beaten trails along the banks of our inland lakes, which were used for

hunting purposes, for mutual intercourse, and as routes of communication between the central thoroughfare, and the river trails which converged upon Tioga.

We have thus followed the devious footsteps of the Iroquois, for many hundred miles through their territories, and restored some of the names in use during the era of Indian occupation. Facts of this character may not possess a general interest; but they will find an appropriate place among our aboriginal remains. The trails of our Indian predecessors, indeed, have been obliterated, and the face of nature has been transformed; but all recollection of the days of Indian supremacy cannot as easily pass away. They will ever have "a share in our history."

"The Empire State, as you love to call it," said a Cayuga chief on a recent occasion, "was once laced by our trails from Albany to Buffalo,—trails that we had trod for centuries,—trails worn so deep by the feet of the Iroquois, that they became your roads of travel, as your possessions gradually eat into those of my people. Your roads still traverse those same lines of communication, which bound one part of the Long House to the other. Have we, the first holders of this prosperous region, no longer a share in your history? Glad were your fathers to sit down upon the threshold of the Long House. Had our forefathers spurned you from it, when the French were thundering at the opposite side to get a passage through, and drive you into the sea, whatever

has been the fate of other Indians, the Iroquois might still have been a nation, and I, instead of pleading here for the privilege of living within your borders, I—might have had a country.”¹

A brief reference to Indian runners will not be inappropriate in this connection. To convey intelligence from nation to nation, and to spread information throughout the Confederacy, as in summoning councils upon public exigencies, trained runners were employed. But three days were necessary, it is said, to convey intelligence from Buffalo to Albany. Swiftmess of foot was an acquirement, among the Iroquois, which brought the individual into high repute. A trained runner would traverse a hundred miles per day. With relays, which were sometimes resorted to, the length of the day's journey could be considerably increased. It is said that the runners of Montezuma conveyed intelligence to him of the movements of Cortes, at the rate of two hundred miles per day; but this must be regarded as extravagant. During the last war, a runner left Tonawanda at daylight in the summer season, for Avon, a distance of forty miles upon the trail. He delivered his message, and reached Tonawanda again about noon. In the night their runners were guided by the stars, from which they learned to keep their direction, and regain it, if perchance they lost their way. During the fall and winter, they determined their course by the Pleiades, or

¹ Peter Wilson, (*Wā-o-wo-wā-no'-onk*) before the New York Historical Society, in May, 1847.

penalty attached to this dereliction from the path of integrity.

These were the four principal crimes against society among our primitive inhabitants. The introduction of ardent spirits among them, in modern times, has changed the face of Indian society, and proved the fruitful source of all their calamities; aggravating those disorders which were incident to their social system, and introducing new ones entirely unknown in the days of their sylvan independence. Against this infamous traffic, their wise and good men, from the earliest period of their intercourse with us, have put forth incessant but unavailing protestations. The power of self-control, in this particular, was much weaker with the red man than the white; and the consequences of indulgence more lamentable and destructive. The "fire-water," as they have fitly termed it, has been a more invincible and devouring enemy than civilization itself, to both of which causes, about in equal degrees, they owe their displacement. It filled their villages with vagrancy, violence and bloodshed: it invaded the peace of the domestic fireside, stimulated the fiercest passions, introduced disease, contention and strife; thus wasting them away by violence, poverty and sickness, and by the casualties of hunger and cold. If there is any one act in our past intercourse with the Iroquois, for which we are more reprehensible than another, it was the permission, short of the penalty of hanging, of this most nefarious and inhuman traffic. A Mohawk chief, in 1754, thus

addressed the governor of the province of New York upon this subject: "There is an affair about which our hearts tremble; this is the selling of rum in our castles. It destroys many both of the old and young people. We request of all the governors here present, that it may be forbidden to carry it among any of the Five Nations."¹ About the same time a representation was made to the British government, as follows: "They are supplied with rum by the traders, in vast and almost incredible quantities, the laws of the colonies now in force being insufficient to restrain the supply; and the Indians of every nation are frequently drunk, and abused in their trade, and their affections thereby alienated from the English. They often wound and murder each other in their liquor, and to avoid revenge flee to the French; and perhaps more have been lost by these means than by the French artifices."²

The love of truth was another marked trait of the Indian character. This inborn sentiment flourished in the period of their highest prosperity, in all the freshness of its primeval purity. On all occasions, and at whatever peril, the Iroquois spoke the truth without fear and without hesitation. Disimulation was not an Indian habit. In fact, the language of the Iroquois does not admit of double speaking, or of the perversion of the words of the speaker. It is simple and direct, not admitting of those shades of meaning and those nice discriminations which pertain to polished languages. Subse-

¹ Doc. Hist. N. Y. ii. 591.

² Ib. ii. 610.

quent to their discovery, in their intercourse with the whites, their native truthfulness was sometimes corrupted by traffic and intemperance, but, as a people, they have preserved to this day the same elevation of sentiment in this particular which characterized their ancestors.

To the faith of treaties the Iroquois adhered with unwavering fidelity. Having endured the severest trials of political disaster, this faith furnishes one of the proudest monuments of their national integrity. They held fast to the "covenant chain" with the British until they were themselves deserted, and their entire country became the forfeit of their fidelity. In their numerous transactions with the several provinces formed out of their ancient territories, no serious cause of complaint was found against them for the non-fulfilment of treaty stipulations, although they were shorn of their possessions by treaty after treaty, and oftentimes made the victims of deception and fraud. In their intercourse with Indian nations, they frequently entered into treaties, sometimes of amity and alliance, sometimes of protection only, and in some instances for special purposes. All of these national compacts were "talked into" strings of wampum, to use the Indian expression, after which these were delivered into the custody of *Hono-we-nă'-to*, the Onondaga sachem, who was made hereditary keeper of the Wampum, at the institution of the League; and from him and his successors, was to be sought their interpretation from generation to generation. Hence the expres-

sion—"This belt preserves my words," so frequently met with at the close of Indian speeches, on the presentation of a belt. Indian nations, after treating, always exchanged belts, which were not only the ratification, but the memorandum of the compact.

There was an ancient treaty between the Senecas and the *Gä-quä-ga'-o-no*,¹ or Eries, who resided upon the southern shore of Lake Erie, to the effect that the Genesee river should be the boundary between them, and that when a hostile band of either nation re-crossed this river into its own territories, it should be safe from further pursuit. An infraction of this treaty was one of the reasons of the long-cherished animosity of the Iroquois against them. A similar compact was once made with the *O-ya-dä'-go-o-no*,² or Cherokees, by which the Tennessee river was the limit of pursuit. If a war-party of the latter had returned and re-crossed the Tennessee before they were overtaken by the pursuing Iroquois, they were as safe from their attack, as if intrenched behind an impregnable rampart. The Iroquois band could still invade, if disposed, the territory of the enemy,

¹ This was the Iroquois name of the Erie nation, who were expelled by them about the year 1655. They were an offshoot of the Iroquois stock, and spoke a dialect of their language. Charlevoix calls them the "Cat Nation." Vol. ii. p. 62. It is a singular fact that the Neuter Nation, who dwelt on the banks of the Niagara river, and who were expelled by the Iroquois about the year 1643, was known among them as the *Je-go'-sä-*

sa, or Cat Nation. The word signifies a wild-cat; and from being the name of a woman of great influence among them, it came to be the name of the nation. Charlevoix also speaks of the Neuter Nation, vol. i. p. 377. It is quite probable that he transposed or confounded their aboriginal names.

² *O-ya-dä'-go-o-no*, the Iroquois name of the Cherokees, signifies, "The people who dwell in caves."

but they passed the camp of the retreating war-party without offering the slightest molestation.

The Iroquois prided themselves upon their sacred regard for the public faith, and punished the want of it with severity when an occasion presented. An example is to be found in the case of the *Sag-a-na'-gã*, or Delawares. After they had been subdued, and had acknowledged their dependence by sending the tributary wampum, they made an inroad upon a western nation under the protection of the Iroquois, notwithstanding their knowledge of the treaty, and a prohibition against its infringement. A deputation of Iroquois chiefs went immediately into the country of the Delawares, and having assembled the people in council, they degraded them from the rank of even a tributary nation. Having reproved them for their want of faith, they forbade them from ever after going out to war, divested them of all civil powers, and declared that they should henceforth be as women. This degradation they signified in the figurative way of putting upon them the *Gã-kã'-ah*, or skirt of the female, and placing in their hands a corn-pounder, thus showing that their business ever after should be that of women. The Delawares never emancipated themselves, after this act of denationalization.¹

¹ The Delawares, about the year 1742, having sold some of their lands upon the Delaware river to Pennsylvania, without the knowledge or consent of the Iroquois, Canassetego, the Onondaga chief before mentioned, reproved them in a speech, from which some extracts are subjoined in further illustration of the lordly manner in which the Iroquois conducted themselves towards subjugated nations. "Let this belt of wampum serve to chastise you. * * How came you to take upon you to sell land at

After war had been declared against any nation, either by the congress of sachems at Onondaga, or by an individual nation against a neighboring enemy, the existence of the war was indicated by a tomahawk painted red, ornamented with red feathers, and with black wampum, struck in the war-post in each village of the League. Any person was then at liberty to organize a band, and make an invasion. This was effected in a summary manner. Dressed in full costume, the war-chief who proposed to solicit volunteers and conduct the expedition, went through the village sounding the war-whoop to announce his intentions; after which he went to the war-post, *Gä-on-dote'*, and having struck into it his red tomahawk, he commenced the war-dance. A group gathered around him, and as their martial ardor was aroused by the dance, they enlisted, one after the other, by joining in its performance. In this manner a company was soon formed; the matrons of the village prepared their subsistence while the dance was performing; and at its close, while they

all! We conquered you; we made women of you; you know you are women, and can no more sell land than women; nor is it fit that you should have the power of selling lands, since you would abuse it. * * We therefore assign you two places to go, either to Wyoming or Shamokin. You may go to either of these places, and then we shall have you more under our eye, and shall see how you behave. Don't deliberate, but remove, and take this belt of wampum." * * Then taking another belt he continued. "After our just reproof

and absolute order to depart from the land, you are now to take notice of what we have further to say to you. This string of wampum serves to forbid you, your children and your grand-children to the latest posterity forever, meddling in land affairs; neither you, nor any who shall descend from you, are ever hereafter to presume to sell any land. For which purpose you are to preserve this string, in memory of what your uncles have this day given you in charge." Colden's Hist. Five Nations, Lond. Ed. 1750, page 80-81.

were yet fired with enthusiasm for the enterprise, they immediately left the village, and turned their footsteps towards the country of the enemy. If the movement was simultaneous in several villages, these parties joined each other on their march, but each band continued under the direction of its own war-chief. Their subsistence was usually charred corn, parched a second time, pounded into fine flour, and mixed with maple-sugar, thus reducing it in bulk and lightness to such a degree, that the warrior could carry without inconvenience in his bear-skin pocket a sufficient supply for a long and perilous expedition. The band took the war-path in single file, and moved with such rapidity that it was but five days' journey to the country of the Cherokees, upon the southern banks of the Tennessee. At their night encampments, they cut upon the trees certain devices to indicate their numbers and destination. On their return, they did the same, showing also the number of captives, and the number slain. When the returning war-party reached the outskirts of their village, they sounded the war-whoop to announce their approach, and to summon the people to assemble for their reception. Then leading their captives, they entered the village in a dancing procession, as they had shortly before gone out. After they had reached the war-post in the centre of the place, a wise-man addressed them in a speech of welcome and congratulation; in reply to which, a speech was made by one of the band, de-

scriptive of their adventures, after which the war-dance was again enjoyed.

The Iroquois never exchanged prisoners with Indian nations, nor ever sought to reclaim their own people from captivity among them. Adoption or the torture were the alternative chances of the captive. A distinguished war-chief would sometimes be released by them from admiration of his military achievements, and be restored to his people, with presents and other marks of favor. No pledges were exacted in these occasional instances of magnanimity, but the person thus discharged esteemed himself bound in honor never again to take the war-path against his generous enemy. If adopted, the allegiance and the affections of the captive were transferred to his adopted nation. When the Indian went forth to war, he emphatically took his life in his hand, knowing that if he should be taken it was forfeited by the laws of war; and if saved by adoption, his country, at least, was lost forever. From the foundation of the Confederacy, the custom of adoption has prevailed among the Iroquois, who carried this principle farther than other Indian nations. It was not confined to captives alone, but was extended to fragments of dismembered tribes, and even to the admission of independent nations into the League. It was a leading feature of their policy to subdue adjacent nations by conquest, and having absorbed them by naturalization, to mould them into one common family with themselves. Some fragments of tribes were adopted