

Historical Sketch of the Indian Battle at Massanoga



face of the perpendicular cliff of the Great Massanoga Precipice are a series of very old Indian paintings which, according to the Minister of Education of Ontario, Mr. Doyle, in his archaeological Report 1894-5 are probably the most extensive and most wonderful in single group in Central North America. And particularly are they of great interest because they commemorate, according to Indian history, a great Indian battle at this natural stronghold. The remarkable relation of the cliff to the Narrows, and of both of them to the surrounding country, make it a great natural fortress, a veritable Gibraltar. This remarkable arrangement in its relation to the surrounding lakes also makes a natural trap for deer, when chased by wolves or dogs, for they would run off of the south arm of the natural harbor and swim across to a break in the precipice called the run-way and make a safe escape. This made the site famous as a hunting ground, and doubtless it has been in the centuries past more than once, besides the time we are about to recite, the scene of bloody conflicts between contending Indian tribes.

Less than two centuries ago the Ojibways or Algonquins occupied this part of Northern Central Ontario, and were in frequent conflict with their neighbours to the south, the Iroquois. The latter were by nature both aggressive and warlike, and on this particular occasion went north as a tribe on an extensive hunting expedition, and prepared for battle with the Ojibways. On arriving at this famous hunting ground and stronghold of the latter, they found it unoccupied, for the Ojibways chanced to be temporarily absent on a hunting expedition to the Whistlemacoon Lakes which lie just north of the Massanoga. The Iroquois hastily took possession of the point and waited the return of the rightful occupants. They did not have to wait long, for before evening had come they saw the large fleet of canoes of the Ojibways come in sight at the head of the lake seven miles distant. Every advantage would seem to be with the occupants of the point, and they prepared for battle, danc-