

## HONNONOUARORIA: THE DREAM FEAST OF THE IROQUOIS.

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One of the most noted of the Iroquois festivals was the Dream Feast, which, while it lasted, was one scene of frenzy. The dream whose behest must be obeyed to the letter, was to the Indian a universal oracle; and on this occasion license was given to every one who may have dreamed of any thing involving his welfare to demand of others that they should tell him his dream and satisfy his desire as thus indicated.

The following description of this feast, called HONNONOUARORIA, is by Father Claude Dablon, who with Father Joseph Chaumonot, witnessed its observance in 1656, the year of their embassy to Onondaga to open the way for the Missions in the several Iroquois Cantons:

"It began with the 22nd of February and lasted three days. Immediately on the proclamation of the Feast by the old men of the village, to whom this duty is entrusted, the whole population, men, women and children, rush from their cabins through the streets in the wildest confusion, but by no means after the fashion of an European masquerade. The larger part are nearly naked and seem insensible to cold, which is almost intolerable to the warmly clad. Certain ones carry with them a plentiful supply of water, and it may be something more hurtful, to throw upon those who come in their way. Others seize fire brands, live coals with ashes, which they fling about without regard to consequences. Others still, occupy themselves in smashing pots, plates and the small household utensils they happen to encounter. A number are armed with swords, spears, knives, hatchets, clubs, which they make as if they would hurl at the first comer; and this is kept up until some one is able to interpret and execute the dream.

"It sometimes occurs, however, that the skill of each and all fails him in divining their meaning, since instead of proposing the matter plainly, they rather conceal it in enigma, chanting a jumble of ambiguous words or gesticulate in silence as in pantomime. Consequently they do not always find an *Œdipus* to solve the riddle. At the same time they obstinately persist in their demand that the dream shall be made known, and if the diviner is too slow, or shows an unwillingness to risk an interpretation, or makes the least mistake, they threaten to burn and destroy. Nor are these empty threats, as we found out to our cost. One of these mad fellows slipping into our cabin demanded in a boisterous manner that we should tell him his dream and that at all hazards he must be satisfied. Now though we declared in the outset that we were not there to obey these dreams, he kept up his noise and gabble long after we had left the spot and retired to a cabin in the open field to avoid the tumult. At length one

<sup>1</sup> Onnonhouara, la cervelle, (brains).—Bruyas, *Mohawk Radicals*. Some render the word "La cervelle renversée,"—"the disordered brain."