

GI-YE-WA-NO-US-QUA-GO-WA.

SACRIFICE OF THE WHITE DOG.

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(Continued.)

The fifth day the sacrifice of the white dog took place, it was the principal day of the festival. The proceedings commenced by all assembling in the council-house, which is situated as in ancient days, in the Onondaga section. When I arrived the council-house was filled with men, women and children of all ages and appearances. Some faces were exceedingly pleasant while others possessed that peculiar look of the Indians which gives them an awe inspiring expression. Each physiognomy seemed to have imprinted upon it, an expression, as if they were engaged in something of more than ordinary importance. The Indian has a strong mastery over his face, he can change it in a second from the most frightful contortions to the most stoical look. The dresses of the women were very striking, They, of course, having all the colors of the rainbow represented, but bright scarlet predominated. The women took their places at one end of the council-house, the men at the other. At about eleven a. m. a chief arose and addressing the keepers of the faith said that the time had now arrived for the days proceedings to commence, he trusted the people would behave themselves, as became proper upon such an important occasion, this injunction seemed to me to be quite unnecessary, as I never saw a more decorous and well behaved assemblage of people in any church.* The principal orator of the festival was an Onondaga chief known by the name of Buck, but whose Indian name is Shanah-wa-tee (the other side of the swamp). He is a perfect specimen of an Indian, of the average height, has an exceedingly handsome face, and is one of the most fluent Indian speakers I ever had the pleasure of listening to. On arising he asked the attention of those present, congratulating them upon retaining their rules and customs, and being able to offer universal praise to the Great Spirit. They ought all to join with him in regret for those absent and taken away during the past year. He said, it is our duty to be ready as we may be called at any moment; it is our duty to implore and thank the Great Spirit for a continuance of good health, which is the greatest blessing He could give us on entering the new year. His long suffering, bearing all the evils we commit, when He might cut us off at any moment, shows His great mercy towards us, and in spite of all we do against Him He still watches over us, this is the reason we must acknowledge He is the giver of all things, that we are in his hands and should worship Him in mercy, spirit and truth. He made us different to other animals of the world, superior to all other animals. I shall now ask you to offer the sacrifice which I hope will be acceptable and pleasing to Him and that He will receive the offering." He then called the attention of the people, saying that they would hear the address to the Great Spirit outside. The speech was received with ejaculations of approval. A chief next arose and gave the rules

*Whenever the Great Spirit was addressed there was always a solemn silence.

which were to be observed while carrying the the dog to the place of sacrifice, saying none of them must presume to go out of order. The white dog was then brought in and placed upon a bench in the centre of the council-house. The sight was an exceedingly impressive one, the solemn way in which this part of the proceedings was carried on, reminded one forcibly of a Christian funeral service. Immediately the dog was placed upon the bench all present arose to their feet, and, going to where it lay, tied ribbons of every color to different parts of the body. It had previously been daubed with red Indian paint. There was a bunch of pure white feathers fastened to the centre of the body and another around the neck, so that by the time it had all the ribbons fastened on, it was almost impossible to see anything of the dog. The two front legs were tied together by themselves, also the two hind ones. The four were then attached together with a ribbon, which represents that the dog has no other power than only that message entrusted to it, and could not walk away. There was also a string of wampum† attached to the body, which is the ancient way of addressing a message to the Great Spirit. At the head of the dog was placed a basket containing a mixture of bought tobacco and tobacco of their own growing, which is thrown into the fire and ascends as an incense in the open air to the Great Spirit, Who dwells on high.

After the dog had all the offerings attached to it, another short address was delivered, asking the Great Spirit to send them fruits, grain, &c. for their livelihood, and expressing hopes that they might be permitted to live and enjoy the benefits of nature, that everything should be the same as when He created the world, if it had not been for Him they would not have had these blessings, and therefore it was only right that they should return thanks. At the conclusion of this speech all the men left the council-house, the women remaining inside. An Indian was sent for by a messenger who arrived all bedecked in feathers, paint and other aboriginal paraphernalia. This Indian came to take the place of the absent dead. While all went in the council-house again, this messenger of the dead stood outside, singing a song of death lamentation. He then came in and addressed the people saying, he met them again with a heavy heart, and while singing he walked half way round the dog. He again made a short address, speaking to the young ones, telling them to be sincere as they were about sending a message to the Great Spirit. After this speech he once more walked around the dog, but was stopped repeatedly by all those who had lost a friend addressing him. They did so, however, in turns and as nearly as could be gleaned from this part of the ceremony, every time he walked around the dog, which he did a great many times, and was accosted by one of the onlookers, it represented some dead relation for which he offers up a special prayer to the Great Spirit. After every prayer he offered, the women all made a peculiar sound, a sort of grunt, showing they accorded in all he

†The dog had been previously killed, care having been experienced not to break any bones.

†Wampum was a kind of bead made from the inner portion of certain shells, it served a triple purpose among the aborigines viz: currency, decoration and passport.

said. After each time one of them spoke to him he gave a sort of screech, then the individual tribes were asked to accord, afterwards all the tribes in unison. After this part was over he again started walking around the dog, while they all kept making the same sound, which ended with a shout. He now answered questions which had been asked him, and told them it was their duty to offer up prayers to the Great Spirit as it was His will that some of them should return to earth. This address was delivered while standing still. He then commenced to sing again, while all the men kept up a continual guttural noise. It sounded very much like "Ye-ah-yeah-yeah." After he had finished singing he again addressed them saying they had all fulfilled the duties enjoined upon them by the Creator by taking part in his echo. He then left the council-house going outside singing at the top of his voice, and walked some distance away. After being out some time he returned again, having stopped singing. Immediately on entering he walked up to the bench upon which the dog lay when all rose to their feet, one of the officers stepping forward took the dog and threw it over his shoulders, while another took the basket containing the incense and carried it in his hands. The trio then walked around the bench twice, when they left the council-house in Indian file, followed first by the men and then by the women, they went straight to the place of sacrifice which was situated at a short distance from the council-house. When they arrived at the altar of sacrifice all present bared their heads, keeping them uncovered during the time occupied in delivering the address to the Great Spirit, which lasted nearly half an hour. The address was delivered by Chief Buck*. He commenced by asking the Great Spirit to open His ears and listen to the words of His people as they ascended on high. In accordance with the ancient customs of their forefathers they now offered adoration unto Him. He said it was important to us all that we should bend our minds to Him who had given us life superior to other creatures that we should annually offer thanks and that the officers (meaning the keepers of the faith) now unanimously have joined to offer such thanks on behalf of the people. "All the different emblems which we now send are offerings from Thy people for blessings they have received, which we trust will be acceptable unto Thee." The dog was then put upon the fire with solemnity the whole assemblage, amounting to several hundred, keeping perfectly motionless, the orator then continued "we send up to heaven on high, on behalf of all mankind, an offering according to Thy will and orders, which Thou hast given us, that we should adhere to Thee, and offer a most sincere sacrifice. Listen to the words of Thy people and give us all those blessings which we have asked on the occasion of the annual festival. We send now direct unto Thee through the air (some tobacco was now thrown in the fire) an offering. See how many of Thy people are now standing here, hoping truly from their hearts that the tabacco we send through the air may reach Thee on high. Extend Thy consideration to Thy people for what

*Chief Buck, besides holding such an important position during these festivals, is the hereditary holder of the wampum belts.