

of these various dialects shows a general resemblance, but no clear indications by which we can determine the particular branch of this linguistic family to which this ancient speech belonged. The words are too few and the orthography too uncertain and corrupt to allow of any positive conclusion from this evidence.

The natural inclination of those who have written on this subject has been to find in the Iroquois the descendants of Cartier's Indians. They were the nearest people who spoke a similar language, and they had, as Colden in his "History of the Five Nations" correctly records, a tradition that their ancestors formerly dwelt north of the St. Lawrence, near the site of Montreal. This tradition, however, as is now known, referred to a primitive and long distant period, when the Hurons and the Iroquois formed separate bands of one united people, and possessed the country on the north shore of the St. Lawrence, from Lake Ontario to the Gulf. From this region they both emigrated, at different periods, impelled partly by dissensions which had broken out between them, and partly by the attacks of the fierce Algonkin nomads who surrounded them. The Iroquois took possession of the country south of Lake Ontario, which they had inhabited, as their traditions affirm, for centuries prior to Cartier's visit. At a much later day, and, it would seem, soon after the French explorer had left the St. Lawrence, the Hurons also deserted their ancient seats on the north bank of that river, and retreated to the distant shores of Lake Huron. The impelling cause of their flight was the persistent hostility of the Iroquois, who had lately become much more formidable through their confederation. The retreat of the Hurons to the west gave them a respite of nearly a century, during which their numbers seem to have increased, and their villages along the Georgian Bay, surrounded by well-cultivated fields, acquired the aspect of comfort and homely wealth which delighted the founder of New France when he first beheld it. "To the eye of Champlain," writes Parkman, "accustomed to the desolation he had left behind, it seemed a land of beauty and abundance. There was a broad opening in the forest, fields of maize, with pumpkins ripening in the sun, patches of sunflowers, from the seeds of which the Indians made hair-oil, and in the midst the Huron town of Otouacha. In all essential points it resembled that which Cartier, eighty years before, had seen at Montreal: the same triple palisade of crossed and intersecting trunks, and the same long lodges of bark, each containing many households. Here, within an area of sixty or seventy miles, was the seat of one of the most remarkable savage communities of the continent." *

* "Pioneers of France in the New World," 7th edit., p. 367.