

THE INDIAN.

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Where are our Chiefs of old? Where our Heroes of mighty name?
The fields of their battles are silent—scarce their mossy tombs remain.—CASIAN.

[\$1.50 per Annum
IN ADVANCE.

VOL. I.

HAGERSVILLE, ONT., WEDNESDAY, APRIL 14, 1886.

NO. 7

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

SACRIFICE OF THE WHITE DOG.

C. A. HIRSCHFELDER.

The Iroquois Indians, from the time their league was first organized, have celebrated six principal feasts or thanksgivings, which are held annually. The exact period for celebrating these is somewhat dependent upon the weather, the time being appointed after the various crops become ripe. They take the form of offerings to Hawenniyo* the Great Spirit for favors received from Him. Even at the present day the Indians cling with much pertinacity to all their ancient customs, regarding with sacredness the feasts, dances, and other festivities practiced by their forefathers. Although the christianized Indians take no part now in the events which, whom we denominate, pagan Indians, celebrate, still some of the most sincere of the reformed Indians say that they would be sorry to see all the ancient usages of their ancestors sink into oblivion, in a few years become a thing of the past, and in the course of time have them rehearsed more as fables than of customs which have been in vogue by a branch of the human family, especially such dances as do not in any way refer to their religion. That it is only a matter of a short time when such will be the case we are all aware. The Indians are rapidly assuming the manners of the whites, and also advancing in christian religion, we ought not therefore, to miss a single opportunity to record, whenever at all practicable, full and complete particulars of such ceremonies as may come under our observation. The most slight customs are of the greatest value to the ethnogical student and historiographer. In trying to unravel the mysterys with which an ancient people are enshrouded, we cannot be too minute in detail. We can only hope to remove the penumbra by exactness in our deductions from the most careful study of their character. We have now a grand opportunity which will soon be lost, as the feasts etc which are celebrated at the present day, although somewhat modified, are even yet in the main points adhered to as in the past, all the most important features being religiously kept. The six regular festivals anciently observed by the Iroquois were, first, the Maple Dance, "O-ta-de-none-ne-o na wa-ta thanks to the maple."† In this thanksgiving they return thanks to the maple itself for yielding its sweet waters. It was held as soon as the sap com-

menced to run. As Morgan justly says "the primary cause of this ceremonial was to return thanks to the maple itself, but there is no doubt the Great spirit was also thanked for the gift of the maple." Next in order was the Spring planting festival A-yent-wa-ta. This dance was held when the season arrived for planting; the main object of it was to invoke the Great Spirit's blessing upon the seed transmitted to the earth so that it might in due time come to maturity and yield them a bountiful harvest. They at the same time gave thanks to the Great Spirit for the return of this season. The ceremonies in connection with it were much similar to the maple dance. Then came the berry festival Ha-nun-da-yo. Mr. Morgan says in connection with this dance. "The Iroquois seized upon this spontaneous gift of nature for their sustenance, as another suitable occasion for a thanksgiving festival. By such ceremonials they habituated their minds to a recognition of the providential care of Ha-wen-ui-yo; cultivating at the same time a grateful spirit for the constant return of his gifts." This dance which was similar to the two preceding ones terminated with a strawberry feast. The dance following the berry festival was of more than ordinary importance, being the Green Corn festival, Ah-dake-wa-o. The ceremonies in connection with this festival lasted four days. As corn was really the staple food of all the northern Indians, there is little wonder that when this grain arrived at maturity there should be much rejoicing. The more stationary tribes like the Hurons and Iroquois extensively cultivated maize and have done so from unknown antiquity. In my excavations in the ancient Huron country I have frequently found enormous quantities of burnt corn. This can be accounted for by the fact that the Indians when they expected an attack from an enemy would burn their superfluous stock if they thought they would be vanquished or have to leave that particular section of country. If the corn crop turned out a failure famine stared them in the face, as grain was not plentiful enough to supply all their wants. The speeches in connection with these festivities consisted of frequent thanks to the Great Spirit for all the mercies showered upon them, and repeated acknowledgements of how dependent they were to Him for all their requisites of life. Each day various speeches were delivered, while the night time was devoted to feasting. The next celebration was the Harvest festival, Da-yo-nun-neo-qua na-deo-ha-ko. This festival like the green corn lasted for four days, its main object being almost identical to our thanksgiving day.

The sixth celebration was the New Years festival the great jubilee of the Iroquois at which the sacrifice of the white dog takes place. The Iroquois of the present day celebrate almost the

same events just enumerated and, as before remarked, there is little change in the form of their ceremonies, as they adhere as nearly as possible to the original ideas of their forefathers. The only change of any importance between the festivals celebrated in ancient days and those of the present, is that instead of having a maple festival they hold a vegetable thanksgiving in the fall in its place. There are regularly appointed officers who take charge of the various festivals. They are elected and occupy the position for life, provided they are faithful to the trust imposed on them. They have no power except during the celebration of their different events, at which time they take complete charge of the arrangements, in this way every man seems to know exactly his duty, and a hitch never seems to occur. It is astonishing to see with what precision and exactitude everything goes off, notwithstanding the fact that nearly all their dances and festivals are of a most complicated character. There are both men and women appointed to this important position who are denominated Honunde-ont, or "Keepers of the Faith," there is no restriction as to how many of these Keepers may be appointed. At present there are some forty as nearly as I could ascertain. Eight of these are principal officers, the others merely subordinates who attend to all the trivial duties. The office when once imposed upon them they are supposed and expected to accept, although it is not compulsory to hold it all their lives, they may resign if they desire to do so. There is no particular costume to mark them as special officers, but, of course, the participants all know them, and are guided altogether by their advice and arrangements during the celebration of any event. The great New Year's jubilee of the Iroquois in the course of which celebration the sacrifice of the white dog takes place is and always has been their most solemn and religious rite. The Indian name for this festival is Gi-ye-wa-no-us-qua-go-wa, which literally means "The most excellent Faith" or "The supreme belief." The Iroquois believed that in ancient days there was a covenant made to their forefathers by the Great Spirit to the effect that should they every year sacrifice a white dog (It must be a spotless white, as white as the emblem of purity among them) also of peace and goodwill, and send up to Him its spirit, He would receive it as an acknowledgment of their adherence to His worship, His ears would then be open and He would listen to their petition. Their idea of selecting a dog was probably owing to his great fidelity to man and his companion in the chase, so that he would be the most trusty animal to carry their petitions and approach Ha-wen-ni-yo in the most acceptable manner. The ceremonies in connection with this festival lasted seven days. The morning of the first day was principally devoted

*Hawenniyo literally means "He who rules," or "He who is master." Mr. H. Hale says the term Great Spirit as rendered is derived from European intercourse; he uses the term "The all ruler."

†Lewis H. Morgan, League of the Ho-de-no-sao-nee. In this valued work Mr. Morgan describes these festivals.