

DISCOVERY OF BURLINGTON BAY.

plished. You can see scattered over this slope curious rounded heaps of about forty to one hundred feet long and ten wide, a spade at once reveals that they are heaps of ashes, containing many fragments of Indian pottery, bones of animals, and broken weapons. On a portion of the plain Indian corn had probably been cultivated. Here at some distant period had evidently been situated an important Indian town of the Neuter nation. This tribe as before mentioned, occupied the country between the Niagara and Detroit rivers. In their wars with the Indians of Michigan they acted with more ferocious cruelty than even the Huron or Iroquois, roasting and eating their prisoners of war of both sexes. The men going without clothing of any kind in summer. Their time of destruction however followed quickly upon that of the Hurons, for after the slaughter of the latter, the Iroquois turned all their fury upon the Neuters and left no survivors whatever.

Proceeding to the highest point of the plain quite at one side of the clusters of ash heaps, were discovered the Ossuaries. They consisted of three pits. One measuring forty feet long by seventeen wide and five in depth, and the two others circular about 12 feet in diameter and 7 feet in depth. Upon the former were two large pine stumps, the rings or growths of the larger numbering 125. All these pits were situated within a few yards of each other. In them were found partially decayed bones of several hundreds of persons of all ages, together with many curious articles, such as, some 30 copper and brass kettles, varying in size from 3 to 26 inches in diameter, containing in one case two skeletons; in another a small bronze spoon, in several others the dust of a wooden spoon and traces of food. Also 8 or 10 large tropical shells, brought probably from the coast of Florida, and evidently used in the manufacture of antique shell beads or wampum.

Many hundreds of these shell beads were also obtained, together with beads made from porcelain, glass, stone, baked clay, obsidian, shale, etc., some round, others square, others oblong and several inches in length, of all sizes imaginable. With these were found antique pipes of stone and clay, many of them bearing extraordinary devices, figures of animals, and of human heads wearing the comical cap, noticed on similar relics found in Mexico and Peru.

There were also found the remains of several axes of the old French pattern; specimens of Indian pottery in the shape of vases or pots, made of coarse sand and clay, well baked and constructed evidently with the view of being suspended over a fire. Two

very handsome ones were obtained entire. In portions of the pits, skeletons were found entire or nearly so, and placed somewhat regularly, not only side by side but in layers upon each other; but in other parts all the small bones appeared to be wanting, and skulls and large bones mingled in the greatest possible confusion.

It seems quite clear that these pits were places of ancient Indian sepulture, and that on this spot were celebrated one or more of those great ceremonies called Feasts of the Dead which the Huron and other Indian tribes were in the habit of performing once in ten or twelve years. One of these feasts was witnessed by Father Brebeuff, a Jesuit missionary, in the year 1636 at the Indian town of Ossossane, a little east of Collingwood. He describes it in the following language. "At each village the corpses were lowered from their scaffolds and raised from their graves. Their coverings were removed and the hideous relics arranged in a row surrounded by the weeping, shrieking, howling concourse. Thus were gathered all the village dead for the last 12 years. Each family reclaimed its own, and immediately addressed itself to removing what remained of flesh from the bones. These were wrapped in skins, and, together with the recent corpses—which were allowed to remain entire, but which were also wrapped carefully in furs—were now carried to one of the largest cabins, and hung to the numerous cross poles, which, like rafters, support the roof.

Here the concourse of mourners seated themselves at a funeral feast, and as the squaws distributed food, a chief harangued the assembly, lamenting the loss of the deceased, and extolling their virtues. This solemnity over, the mourners began their march for Ossossane, uttering at intervals in unison a dreary wailing cry; and as they stopped to rest at night at some village on the way, the inhabitants came forth to meet them with a mournful hospitality. From every town processions like these were converging toward Ossossane, and thither, on the urgent invitation of the chiefs, we repaired. The capacious bark houses were filled to overflowing, and the surrounding woods gleamed with camp fires. Funeral games were in progress, the young men and women practicing archery and other games prizes offered by the mourners in the name of their dead relatives. Some of the chiefs conducted us to the place prepared for the ceremony—a cleared area in the forest many acres in extent. In the midst was a pit about 10 feet deep and 30 wide. Around it was reared a high and strong scaffolding, and on this were placed several upright poles, with