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A HURON HISTORICAL LEGEND

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Huron and Iroquois nations, along with the Eries, Andastes, Tuscaroras, and other tribes of the west and south.

Not quite seventy years later, in 1603, when the founder of Canada, the illustrious Champlain, revisited the scenes of Cartier's discoveries, not a trace of the two populous and well-fortified towns remained. In place of their commodious dwellings and well-cultivated fields he found only some wretched wigwams, in which were huddled a few half starved Indians of the wandering Algonkin race. What had become of their more civilized predecessors? It is remarkable that neither Champlain, nor any of the intelligent explorers or missionaries who followed him, seem to have troubled themselves about this interesting question. There could have been no difficulty at that time in ascertaining the truth; and indeed, as will be shown, the facts were well known to some at least of those new adventurers. But their minds were absorbed with matters which to them were of more immediate importance, and they did not take the trouble to record events which seemed to them to be of as little consequence as those "battles of the kites and crows," the wars of the ancient Britons and Saxons, appeared to Milton. But as these obscure struggles have lately furnished subjects of much interest to the readers of Freeman, Green and other historians of our day, so the early events of aboriginal history are beginning to assume a new importance in the annals of our continent.

In the time of Champlain, the Indians of the Huron-Iroquois race, nearest to Montreal and Quebec, were the famous "Five Nations" of the Iroquois confederacy. They possessed, as is well known, nearly the whole of Northern New York, their territories extending from Lake Champlain westward to the Genesee River. In another direction, near Lake Huron, in the extreme north-west of what is now the Province of Ontario, dwelt the people who were known to the French as Hurons, and to the English, at a later day, as Wyandots—their proper name being Wāndat, or as the Iroquois now pronounce it Wennat, or Wānat. The Hurons became the allies, and the Iroquois the most formidable enemies of the French colonists. If the people whom Cartier discovered had not been utterly exterminated, it is in one or other of these communities—the Iroquois or the Hurons—that we must look to find the descendants of the former denizens of Hochelaga and Stadaconé.

The evidence of language unfortunately does not help us here. The Huron and Iroquois languages differed considerably, but there was a close family likeness between them. The Iroquois had five dialects and the Hurons at least two, which showed many variations of words and forms. A comparison of the brief vocabularies preserved by Cartier with the words