

relatives like fagots. Thus the procession slowly defiled along the forest pathways with which the country of the Hurons was everywhere intersected; and as they passed beneath the dull shadow of the pines, they uttered at intervals, in unison, a dreary, wailing cry, designed to imitate the voices of disembodied souls * winging their way to the land of spirits, and believed to have an effect peculiarly soothing to the conscious relics which each man bore. When, at night, they stopped to rest at some village on the way, the inhabitants came forth to welcome them with a grave and mournful hospitality.

"From every town of the nation of the Bear processions like this were converging towards Ossossané. This chief town of the Hurons stood on the eastern margin of Nottawasaga Bay, encompassed with a gloomy wilderness of fir and pine. * * *

The capacious bark houses were filled to overflowing, and the surrounding woods gleamed with camp fires: for the processions of mourners were fast arriving, and the throng was swelled by invited guests of other tribes. Funeral games were in progress, the young men and women practising archery and other exercises for prizes offered by the mourners in the name of their dead relatives. Some of the chiefs conducted Brébeuf and his companions to the place prepared for the ceremony. It was a cleared area in the forest many acres in extent. In the midst was a pit about ten feet deep and thirty feet wide. Around it was reared a high and strong scaffolding, and on this were planted numerous upright poles, with cross-poles extended between for hanging the funeral gifts and the remains of the dead.

"Meanwhile there was a long delay. The Jesuits were lodged in a house where more than a hundred of these bundles of mortality were hanging from the rafters. Some were mere shapeless rolls, others were made up into clumsy effigies adorned with feathers, beads, and belts of dyed porcupine quills. * * * At length the officiating chiefs gave the word to prepare for the ceremony. The relics were taken down, opened for the last time, and the bones caressed and fondled by the women amid paroxysms of lamentation. Then all the processions were formed anew, and each bearing its dead, moved towards the area prepared for the last solemn rites. As they reached the ground they defiled in order, each to a spot assigned to it on the outer limits of the clearing. Here the bearers of the dead laid their bundles on the ground, while those who carried the funeral gifts outspread and displayed them for admiration of the beholders. Their number was immense and their value relatively very great. Among them were many robes of beaver and other rich furs, collected and preserved for years with a view to this festival. Fires were now lighted, kettles slung, and around the entire circle of the clearing, the scene was like a fair or caravansary. This continued till three o'clock in the afternoon when the gifts were repacked and the bones shouldered afresh. Suddenly at a signal from the chiefs, the crowd ran forward from every side towards the scaffold, like soldiers to the assault of a town, scaled it by rude ladders with which it was furnished, and hung their relics and their gifts to the forest of poles which surmounted it. Then the ladders were removed and a number of chiefs, standing on the scaffold, harangued the crowd below, praising the dead and extolling the gifts, which the relatives of the departed now bestowed in their names upon their surviving friends.

"During these harangues other functionaries were lining the grave with robes of beaver skin. Three large copper kettles were next placed in the middle and then ensued a scene of hideous confusion. The bodies which had been left entire were brought to the edge of the grave, flung in, and arranged in order at the bottom by ten or twelve Indians stationed there for the purpose, amid the wildest excitement and the uproar of many hundred mingled voices. When this part of

* It is not easy to conjecture where they got their model for this imitation.