

ON THE PAGANISM OF THE CIVILISED IROQUOIS OF ONTARIO

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It has often been a subject for doubt whether this or that primitive people, if left to itself, would have emerged into civilisation—in other words, it has proved a matter of uncertainty whether the people concerned possessed the potency of progress. In some cases Dame Nature has relentlessly cut off the supply of raw material before the experiment was well begun, and in others but a short time afterwards, showing us, at any rate, that the elements of success were nullified, and worse than nullified, by contact with superior peoples.

Respecting no division of the human race has there been more diversity of opinion as to innate possibilities of improvement than with regard to our American Indians, or, as a sister society has lately decided to call them, *Amerinds*. But the terms just mentioned are of very wide application—much too wide to make it possible for any one to arrive at a conclusion, for what is true of one stock, or of one group in a stock, may be wholly, or largely, inapplicable to any other division or subdivision.

The Huron Iroquois believe that they themselves originated from a hole under a hill on the north shore of the St. Lawrence river. Their traditions further declare that on account of a great dissension which took place, those who are latterly known more specifically as Hurons, and have been regarded by Brinton and Hale on philological grounds as the senior branch, found their way by circuitous routes to the country which lies north of Toronto, on the south shore of the Georgian Bay, while the portion we call Iroquois took a southerly course and occupied the northern and central part of what is now the state of New York.

Other two not inconsiderable bodies found excellent hunting grounds still farther west, on the northern and southern shores of Lake Erie, the former being known to us as the Attiwandarons, or Neutrals, and the latter as the Eries, or Cats. Other divisions lying south of the main body were the Tuscaroras and Andastes. It is wholly with those who made their home in New York and ultimately in Ontario, that we are now concerned.

It is unnecessary for present purposes to follow the history of these people from the date of their first contact with the French. Let it suffice to say that early in the seventeenth century they became the undying enemies of France, on account of an attack that was made on them by Champlain, who allied himself with the Hurons of Ontario, and thus initiated a series of wars that continued