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A HURON HISTORICAL LEGEND

The wonderful tenacity with which uncivilized tribes frequently retain the memory of ancient events in their history is an interesting fact, which of late years has begun to receive attention from philosophical inquirers. Judge Fornander, of Hawaii, and Sir George Gray, in New Zealand, in their works on the Polynesian race and mythology, have shown how distinctly the people of that race, scattered over the many islands of the Pacific Ocean, have preserved the reminiscences of voyages, settlements, wars, alliances and family successions, during a period of nearly two thousand years. The Lenni Lenape, or Delawares, had a clear tradition of the war which ended in the overthrow of the Alligewi, or Moundbuilders, of Ohio, an event which could not have occurred much less than a thousand years ago. The Iroquois had also a traditional record of the same event, and they had preserved with remarkable minuteness the details of the formation of their confederacy, which preceded by about fifty years the era of Columbus. Their congeners and ancient enemies, the Hurons, were not less careful in retaining and transmitting their oral records. I had the good fortune to obtain from an authentic source one of these traditions, which clears up a doubtful question of some interest relating to the earliest intercourse between the Indians and the European settlers of North America.

When the enterprising French explorer, Jacques Cartier, in 1535, first sailed up the St. Lawrence, he found the sites of what are now the cities of Quebec and Montreal occupied by two Indian settlements, named Stadaconè and Hochelaga. They were permanent towns, composed of large houses, fifty yards or more in length, framed of saplings, and cased with bark. Encircling the town was a strong fortification, formed of trunks of trees, set in a triple row, and sustaining galleries furnished with magazines of stones to be hurled against their assailants. This construction of dwellings and defenses, as Mr. Parkman remarks (in his "Pioneers of France in the New World"), was identical with that which was practiced among the tribes of the Huron-Iroquois family, but was not in use among those of Algonkin lineage. This evidence of the stock to which the inhabitants of Hochelaga and Stadaconè belonged was confirmed by two brief vocabularies of their language which Cartier preserved, and which leave no doubt that they were members of the widespread family comprehending the