

their ground after an engagement thus buried the slain of the discomfited party. I am not aware that any such record exists, but nothing can be more reasonable than to conclude that the victors would hasten to bury the bodies of those who had been killed, especially when the fighting had taken place as it so often did at, or close to, a village, and when it involved less trouble and inconvenience to bury the dead than to strike camp and leave the bodies exposed. In the Huron country this must frequently have been a powerful reason, where clearings were made for simple agricultural purposes, and dwellings were erected of a more permanent type than that of the Indian who subsisted altogether by hunting.

Another reason suggests itself, namely, that numerous deaths as the result of sickness or war may have so depleted the living of personal property that nothing in many cases was left for mortuary offerings.

Account for it as we may, it is well at all events to disabuse the popular mind of a fallacy that has been confirmed by so many writers, leading to the belief that every Indian grave necessarily contains objects of human workmanship.

Nevertheless, the great feast of the dead was an occasion of vast importance when conducted according to traditional custom, and occurring as it did at intervals of several years. Brébeuf in 1636, was the first to describe fully the ceremonies attendant upon a communal burial at Ossossané or La Conception, the site of which was not far from the present village of Wyevale. The people inhabiting this district were the Attigneaumontans or Bear Nation, of the Huron confederacy, among all the members of which the practices were similar. From the *Relation* of Brébeuf, and from other sources we are tolerably well informed with regard to the ceremonies in question. Dr. Parkman's vivid rendering of Brébeuf's description may be quoted: "The body was usually laid on a scaffold, or, more rarely in the earth. At intervals of ten or twelve years, each of the four nations * which composed the Huron confederacy gathered together its dead, and conveyed them all to a common place of sepulture. Here was celebrated the great 'Feast of the Dead,'—in the eyes of the Hurons, their most solemn and important ceremonial. * * * * *

"The corpses were lowered from the scaffolds and lifted from their graves. Their coverings were removed by certain functionaries appointed for the office, and the hideous relics arrayed in a row, surrounded by the weeping, shrieking, howling concourse. The spectacle was frightful. Here were all the village dead of the last twelve years. * * * Each family reclaimed its own, and immediately addressed itself to removing what remained of flesh from the bones. These, after being tenderly caressed, with tears and lamentations, were wrapped in skins and adorned with pendent robes of fur. In the belief of the mourners they were sentient and conscious. A soul was thought to still reside in them; and to this notion, very general among the Indians, is in no small degree due that extravagant attachment to the remains of the dead, which may be said to mark the race.

"These relics of mortality, 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 houses and hung to the numerous cross-poles, which, like rafters, supported the roof. Here the concourse of mourners seated themselves at a funeral feast; and as the squaws of the household distributed the 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 Ossossané, the scene of the final rite. The bodies remaining entire were borne on a kind of litter, while the bundles of bones were slung at the shoulders of the

* The Tobacco Nation similar in language and manners, did not join the Huron confederacy until about 1639-40.