

"A brief explanation of the principal features of the system of the Iroquois is annexed, which will assist in working out every other, particularly if they are founded upon the same ideas.

"The institutions of the Iroquois were founded upon the family relationships; in fact, their celebrated league was but an elaboration of these relationships into a complex system of civil polity. At the base of this were their laws of descent. They were unlike both the civil and the canon law; but yet were original and well defined. The chief differences were two: first descent among the Iroquois followed the female line, or passed through the mother; while in each of the former systems it follows the male, or passes through the father. In the second place the collateral lines, with the Iroquois, were finally brought into or merged in the lineal; while, in the other cases, every remove from the common ancestor separated the collateral lines from the lineal, until after a few generations actual relationship ceased among collaterals.

"To bring out distinctly this code of descent, it will be necessary to give a brief explanation of the division of the Iroquois into tribes, the union of the several tribes into one nation, and of the several nations into one league. Without a reference to their civil organization, it would be impossible to present it in an understandable form.

"In each of the five nations who composed the original league, there were eight tribes, named: Wolf, Bear, Beaver, and Turtle; Deer, Saïpe, Heron, and Hawk. The Onondaga nation, therefore, was a counterpart of the Cayuga, each having the same number of tribes, and of the same name; so also, interchangeably, of the Oneida, the Mohawk, and the Seneca nations. In effect, the Wolf tribe was divided into five parts, and one-fifth part of it placed in each of the five nations. The remaining tribes were subjected to the same division and distribution. Between the individual members of the Wolf or other tribe thus divided, or, in other words, between the separated parts of each tribe, there existed the tie of consanguinity. The Mohawk of the Turtle tribe recognized the Seneca of the Turtle tribe as a relative, and between them existed the bond of kindred blood. In like manner the Oneida of the Hawk tribe received the Onondaga or the Cayuga of the same tribe as a relative, not in an ideal or conventional sense, but as actually connected with him by the ties of consanguinity. Herein we discover an element of union between the five nations, of remarkable vitality and power. A cross-relationship existed between the several tribes of each nation and the tribes of corresponding name in each of the other nations, which bound them together in the league with indissoluble bonds. If either of the nations had wished to cast off the alliance, it would have broken this eight-fold bond of consanguinity. Had the nations fallen into collision with each other, it would have brought Hawk tribe against Hawk tribe—in a word, brother against brother. The history of the Iroquois exhibits the wisdom of these organic provisions; for, during the long period through which the league subsisted, they never fell into anarchy, nor even approximated to a dissolution from internal disorders.

"At no time in the history of the Iroquois could a man marry a woman of his own tribe, even in another nation. All the members of a tribe were within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity; and to this day, among the descendants of