

most powerful Indian league which is known to have existed on the continent. It consisted of the Onondagas, the Cayugas, the Senecas, the Oneidas, and the Mohawks; and in 1712 the Tuscaroras were adopted into the confederation. The warriors of these tribes were men of large stature and muscular forms. More savage in their expression of countenance than the Algonquin race, their determination seemed to mark every feature of the face and every nerve of the body. Military skill, courage, shrewdness, forecast, energy, ambition, and eloquence, were their prominent traits. Affiliated by immemorial connexion, and having exercised the policy of conquest over the other tribes, they held an extensive tract of territory in their hands. They claimed, in fact, by patrimony or conquest, the whole of the country "not occupied by the southern Indians, the Sioux, the Kenisteneaux, and the Chippewas, and by the English and French, as far west as the Mississippi and Lake Winnipeg, as far north-west as the waters which unite this lake with Hudson's Bay and Labrador."*

In their policy the Iroquois appear to have had not only more vigor, but more system, than the other Indian tribes. Their general interests were managed by a grand council of chiefs, who annually assembled at their central canton, Onondaga, in the state of New-York. The beautiful region of the lakes which bear their names, in that state, was their favorite council ground. Each nation was divided into three tribes, whose *totems* were the tortoise, the wolf, and the bear. All their councils were conducted with the greatest decorum, solemnity, and deliberation. "In the characteristics of profound policy," says Gov. Clinton of New-York, in an eloquent Discourse, "they surpassed an assembly of feudal barons, and were, perhaps, not far inferior to the great Amphictyonic council of Greece." "The senators of Venice," says an equally eloquent writer,† "do not appear with a graver countenance, and perhaps do not speak with more majesty and solidity than these ancient Iroqueses."

* Clinton's Discourse.

† Father Louis Hennepin, one of the most accomplished Catholic missionaries upon the Lakes during the early period of French colonization, in his work entitled, "Hennepin's Voyage to North America."