

archaeology, the Jesuits and other contemporary writers have told us much that is invaluable concerning this important festival.

Reverence for their dead was a marked characteristic of the Huron people, a sentiment that was common among all the red races. It is doubtful if those refinements of Christian feeling that find expression in the mortuary rites of our civilized white races, are one whit more profound than those outpourings of sorrow, which were lavished by the Hurons upon the remains of their departed relatives, at their periodical Feasts of the Dead.

When the early settlers, in western Ontario, were clearing up their lands, they were frequently puzzled at the discovery of large pits filled with human bones, together with warlike and domestic implements and articles of personal adornment, all crowded together in these communal sepulchres. These bone-pits or ossuaries were at first attributed to burials for the disposal of the slain after great battles, or of those who had perished during epidemics of disease. Their true origin, however, was established beyond conjecture by the Jesuit Relations.

Parkman, in the Jesuits in North America, has given us graphic details of what the Hurons considered their most solemn and important ceremonial. It was witnessed by Brébeuf at Ossossané, in the summer of 1636, and a report of it embodied in his Relation of the same year. The following brief description of the solemnity, compiled from the works of these writers, may answer our purpose, without going into details.

Every ten years, or so, each of the four nations of the Huron confederacy held a Feast of the Dead. The time and place, at which the feast should be held, was decided by the chiefs of the nation, in solemn council. All preliminary arrangements having been made, the dead of the past decade were collected from far and near and conveyed to the common rendezvous. Previously however, the corpses which had, as usual, been placed on scaffolds or, more rarely, in the earth, for the time being, were removed from their temporary resting places and prepared by loving relatives for the final rite of sepulture. The bones of such as were reduced to skeletons were tied up in bundles like faggots, wrapped in skins and clothed with pendant robes of costly furs. The bodies of the more recent dead were allowed to remain entire and were clothed also in furs. Then these ghastly bundles of mortality were hung on the cross-poles, which later on sustained the corn harvest, of the principal long-house in the village, and, while the mourners partook of a funeral feast, the chiefs discoursed upon the public or domestic virtues of the deceased. Then commenced the wierd funeral march along the woodland paths