

TOTEMS.

The figures or emblems connected with the signatures of the Indians are called, in the language of the Algonquins, *Totems*; and are the distinguishing marks or signs of the clans or tribes into which the various nations are divided. They are not the personal emblems of the chiefs, although in signing treaties they employ them as their sign manual. Each tribe or clan had its emblem, consisting of the figure of some bird, beast, or reptile, and is distinguished by the name of the animal which it has assumed as a device, as Wolf, Hawk, Tortoise. To different totems, says Parkman in his "Conspiracy of Pontiac," attach different degrees of rank and dignity; and those of the Bear, the Tortoise, and the Wolf are among the first in honor. Each man is proud of his badge, jealously asserting its claim to respect. The use of the totem prevailed among the southern, as well as the northern tribes; Mr. Parkman says that Mr. Gallatin informed him, that he was told by the chief of a Choctaw deputation at Washington, that in their tribe were eight totemic clans, divided into two classes of four each.

Mr. Parkman says again, in the work above cited, page 9, "But the main stay of the Iroquois polity was the system of *totemship*. It was this which gave the structure its elastic strength; and but for this, a mere confederacy of jealous and warlike tribes must soon have been rent asunder by shocks from without, or discord from within. At some early period the Iroquois must have formed an individual nation; for the whole people, irrespective of their separation into tribes, consisted of eight totemic clans; and the members of each clan, to what nation soever they belonged, were mutually bound to one another by those close ties of fraternity which mark this singular institution. Thus the five nations of the confederacy were bound together by an eight-fold band; and to this hour their slender remnants cling to one another with invincible tenacity."

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