

WAR FEAST OF THE IROQUOIS.

In chapter X of his *Relation* (1656) Dablon describes this feast, the immediate occasion of which was the contemplated war with the Eries alluded to in the account of the establishment of the missions among the Iroquois as given in the preliminary chapter of this work.

"We saw in the latter part of January (1656) the ceremony which takes place every winter, in their preparations for war, and which serves to stimulate their courage for the approaching conflict. First of all the war kettle, as they call it, is hung over the fire as early as the preceding autumn, in order that each of the allies going to the war may have the opportunity to throw in' some precious morsel, to be kept cooking through the winter, by which act they are solemnly pledged to take part in the proposed enterprise. The kettle having been kept steadily boiling up to the month of February, a large number of warriors, Senecas as well as Cayugas, gathered to celebrate the war feast which continue, for several nights in succession. They sang their war songs, danced and went through all possible contortions of body and expressions of countenance, protesting the while, that never should they retire from the combat, but fight to the death, whatever tortures they might suffer, before they would yield an inch of ground. At the same time that they make this boast of their courage, they hurl at one another fire brands and hot ashes, strike each other heavy blows, and burn one another to show they do not fear the very worst the enemy can do. Indeed, one must remain firm and suffer himself to be bruised or burned by his nearest friends without flinching; otherwise he is regarded as a miserable coward.

This being done, Father Chaumonot was invited to put something into the war-kettle as a mark of favor toward the enterprise. He replied that this accorded with his own desire, and accommodating himself to their customs, he assured them the French would put powder under the kettle. This pleased them greatly.

The next thing they do, by way of supporting their courage, respects the medicines relied upon to heal the wounds they may receive in battle; and to ensure their virtue for this purpose all the sorcerers or *jongleurs* of the town who are the medicine men of the country, come together, that by their incantations they may impart to these medicines an efficacy and healing power which is not natural to them. The chief of these sorcerers places himself in the midst of his fellows, surrounded by a vast crowd of people; then elevating his voice he declares that he is about to infuse into herbs or roots, which he has in a bag, the power to heal wounds of every description. Whereupon he sings with a full, clear voice, while the others respond by repeating the words of the song, until the healing virtue has entered into the roots; and to prove that this has been really accomplished, he does two