

were sheathed in bark overlapping to shed the rain and snow. Another row of horizontal poles kept these huge bark shingles in place. Along either side of the interior were scaffolds or bunks about four feet from the ground which, when covered with furs, furnished the sleeping compartments. The space beneath was the store-house for fuel and cooking utensils. There was a compartment at the end of the house used as a storeroom for corn, fish, sunflowers and other articles of food. Along the upper poles were hung their bows and arrows, clothing, skins and clusters of ear corn. Down the middle were the fires, each one furnishing heat for two families. The smoke escaped by the long narrow opening left at the top of the house. These houses varied in length, in some cases being 200 feet in length. The long houses were not necessarily straight but followed the configuration of the land upon which they were constructed. Picture to yourself such a house, an abnormal sleeping car with ten fires built down the aisle and crowded with twenty Indian families. You will at once understand that such a house might be a bedlam, reeking with smoke, where privacy was unknown and where the customs of even early civilization could scarce find room for development. The effect of a spirit infected brawler, a half-crazed medicine man or the victim of an infectious disease may be more readily imagined than described.

Perhaps the pen of a ready writer or the tongue of one gifted with rare imagination might weave a story of romance about the fires of one of these Huron long houses, but a careful reading of the descriptions of the Jesuit Fathers, eye-witnesses of their degraded life, compels us to say that the romance existed mainly in the imagination of the writer.

I give you one passing picture from the pen of Parkman:

"He who entered on a winter night beheld a strange spectacle: the vista of fires lighting the smoky concave; the bronzed groups encircling each,—cooking, eating, gambling or amusing themselves with idle badinage; shrivelled squaws, hideous with three score years of hardship; grisly old warriors, scarred with Iroquois warclubs; young aspirants, whose honours were yet to be won; damsels gay with ochre and wampum; restless children pellmell with restless dogs. Now a tongue of resinous flame painted each with feature in vivid light; now the fitful gleam expired, and the group vanished from sight, as their nation has vanished from history."

(Introduction to "The Jesuits in North America," p 14.)

Before we tell how the Iroquois flung themselves like a bomb into the midst of this people and scattered the survivors in so many directions, we must introduce into the story the element that adds so much human interest to the tale.