

the inscription for their gun from their Iroquois visitors and allies, rather than from their nearer Delaware neighbors, may be readily conjectured. At the time when the gun was cast, the Delawares, who had once been noted fighters, and at a later period again became such, had ceased to be a warlike people. Either as a result of defeat in war, or, as they themselves affirmed, by their own voluntary act, they had renounced their independence, and had passed under the protection and control of the powerful Iroquois League. The tribes of this renowned confederacy, then known as the "Six Nations"—the Tuscaroras having been admitted into their league—were at that time in intimate and friendly communication with the government and people of Pennsylvania. In June, 1744, a large delegation of the confederates, headed by the famous chief Canasatego, came to Lancaster to treat with the governor of the colony, in conjunction with commissioners from Maryland and Virginia, on the subject of the French war, which had just commenced. On this occasion the noted Indian agent, Conrad Weiser, of Philadelphia, was interpreter. He must have been well known to the members of the Schuylkill Company; and when they desired to have their war-gift for the public defense signalized by some appropriate motto of unmistakable origin, it was natural that they should seek this inscription in the language of their warlike allies, especially as they had at hand a capable interpreter, well qualified to furnish it. The spelling shows plainly that it was not written by a missionary, but by a person of some cultivation, accustomed, apparently, to both the English and the German orthography.

In the light of these facts the Schuylkill gun becomes exalted from a mere useless piece of metal to a relic and monument of much historical importance. The confederate tribes, whose friendship and capacity were thus strikingly acknowledged, were then at the height of that reputation for valor and policy which had been growing for more than a century. When we bear in mind that during the entire period from the first settlement of the English colonies to the conquest of Canada they held the balance of power in North America, and by their action mainly decided that the whole continent north of Mexico should be British, Protestant, and free, and not a French Catholic despotism, the debt which the cause of liberty and good government owes to these aboriginal federal republicans will be better appreciated. Viewed in connection with the momentous events which signalized its earlier existence, and of which it was at once a product and a memorial, the Schuylkill gun may be fairly deemed a symbol of free thought. For a symbol representing this all-powerful force its motto would seem to be no idle boast, but to affirm a strictly philosophical truth,—*"I am master wherever I am."*