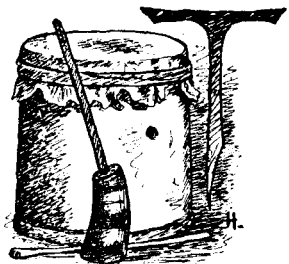


THE ONONDAGA BERRY DANCE

•WRITTEN•AND•ILLUSTRATED•BY•

A. H. H. Heming



THE deep shadows of the overhanging trees are broken here and there by the brilliant reflections of an August sun sparkling and flashing on the rippling waters; over the river floats the soft peals of the village church bells. Half a dozen bronzed faced Indians go tramping along the hot, dusty road, to attend the little white church on the hill. As our horses break into a trot we leave behind us a cluster of white-washed log and frame houses. With the sun in our faces and the Grand River on the left, we ride for an hour or so, then at the third ferry landing we leave the river road and enter a thickly grown hardwood bush, through which we follow for half a mile or more an old cow trail that winds in and out among the trees and undergrowth, over decayed and moss-mantled logs, and across strips of fern-covered marsh, when unexpectedly we come out on a small clearing; and there, on a knoll in the centre, stands the Onondaga Long House.

The name originated from the oblong shape of the structure. It is built of dressed logs roofed with shingles, and on either side open two small square windows. The only entrance looks out over a green sward that is broken on the right by several Indian graves.

A clump of trees on the left partly hides from observation a rude log hut wherein is held, in the early part of February, the

annual sacrifice of the burning of the white dog.

Tying the horses to a tree we walk over to a group of Indians who are lounging in the shade at one end of the building. My companion (Sam. Styers, a Cauaga) converses with an old man who possesses a profusion of shaggy gray hair, which falls over a pair of very broad shoulders. While Sam is addressing him in the Onondaga tongue I take a sketch of the old fellow; three or four smiling youths look over my shoulder and seem to be highly delighted when they see their old chief outlined on paper. From experience I have found that the easiest way to get on the best side of a red man—or for that matter any kind of man—is to make a sketch of him, and, if you flatter him a trifle, so much the better. Probably it was the first time these pagan people had ever seen anything of the kind, for as soon as I tore the sheet from the pad it was eagerly handed around from one to another, followed by numerous exclamations that I could not understand, but which I surmised expressed satisfaction, for in less than two minutes I was introduced to the head men, and ceremoniously escorted into the building. With the exception of the small space at the doorway, a bench runs



Blind Chief Gibson.