

BIRCH BARK LEGENDS OF NIAGARA.

FOUNDED ON TRADITIONS AMONG THE

IROQUOIS OR SIX NATIONS

Within sound of the thundering cataract's roar once worshipped the roaming sons of the forest in all their primitive freedom. They recognized in its thunder the voice, in its mad waves the wrath, and in its crashing whirlpool the Omnipotence of the Great Spirit—the Manitou of their simple creed.

Also in the rising mist, the flight of the soul, and in the beautiful bow—the brilliant path followed by the spirits of good Indians to their Happy Hunting Ground.

With this belief came the custom of yearly offering a sacrifice to the Great Spirit, or whenever any particular blessing was to be acknowledged, or for some wrong perpetrated, to propitiate the righteous anger of their Deity of the roaring waters.

The sacrifice, or offering, consisted of a boat filled with fruit, flowers and any precious gift, which was to be paddled over the foaming cataract by one either drawn by lot or selected by the chiefs; or, as often happened, a voluntary offering of life, as it manifested heroism beyond their usual test of torture. Martyrs thus sacrificed had this consolation: that their spirits were sure to rise in the mist and follow the bright path