

II.—*An Iroquois Condoling Council.*

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(Read May 15, 1895.)

The remarkable confederacy of Indian tribes which, under the name of the "Five Nations" (and later the "Six Nations"), formerly bore sway, from their central abode in northern New York, over a large portion of what is now the United States and Canada, and who may be said to have held for a century the balance of power on this continent between England and France, possessed a form of government which, even while imperfectly understood, excited the curiosity and admiration of many intelligent inquirers. The early Jesuit missionaries, and, after them, Cadwallader Colden, Sir William Johnson, De Witt Clinton and other observers and writers of equal note, had told much about them, all bestowing high praise on the consummate political ability manifested in their league, but all, as it finally appeared, with only a very imperfect understanding of the true basis and real nature, origin and objects of this league. It remained for our own time and for the genius of a scientific investigator of the first order of intellectual power, the late Hon. L. H. Morgan of Rochester, N. Y., to disclose the secrets of this wonderful system—a system so intricately wrought, so profoundly based, so far-reaching, and so beneficently purposed, that its details recorded in his famous book, "The League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee or Iroquois" (published in 1851), while awakening the admiration of all its readers, have in certain respects staggered the belief of some of the most eminent among them. Some justly esteemed historical writers, with large claims to philosophical insight, have been unable to accept the assurance that the primary object of the "high chiefs" representing the Iroquois tribes in their first council of alliance—"barbarians of the stone age" though they were—was to establish a form of government which should not only prevent strife among their own tribes, but might be so extended as to put an end to war among all nations, and to bring about universal peace. A greater philosopher, whose mental vision has been large enough to embrace all races, civilized and savage, and their known political systems, ancient and modern, has found no such difficulty. Mr. Herbert Spencer, in his recent volume, "The Principles of Ethics," quotes Morgan's statement on this point, accepts it without reserve, confirms it by other examples, and points out the facts of human nature on which they are all based. Every government reflects the character of the people who frame it or who willingly submit to it. A people, whether barbarous or civilized, who among themselves are peaceful and united, will have a government tending to peace and unity, both