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Where are our Chiefs of old? Where our Heroes of mighty name?
The fields of their battles are silent—scarce their mossy tombs remain!—OSIAN.

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CHIEF GEORGE H. M. JOHNSON.

(ONWANONSYSHON.)

His Life and Work Among the Six Nations.

BY HORATIO HALE.

The career of this eminent Mohawk chief, who did more perhaps than any other individual of our time for the elevation and advancement of his kindred of the red race, deserves a more permanent record than that of a newspaper obituary. His biography forms the latest and by no means the least interesting chapter in the annals of that famous Iroquois confederacy, which has held an important place in the history of the United States and Canada from the era of Champlain almost to our own day. As he claimed a descent from a champion and fellow-counselor of the great founder of the league, the brave but peace-loving lawgiver Hiawatha, so his character and his acts recall something of the traits and the deeds which authentic tradition ascribes to that no longer mythical hero.

The death of the chief occurred on the 19th of February, 1884, at his residence, Chiefswood, on the Grand River Reserve, in the Province of Ontario, a few miles from the city of Brantford. Though he had attained the age of sixty-seven, his death must be deemed premature. He belonged to a long-lived race and family. His venerable father, Chief John Smoke Johnson, for many years Speaker of the Six Nations' Council, in which he is known by his truly poetical Indian name of Sakayenkvaraghton, or "Disappearing Mist," is still living, in vigorous health of mind and body, at the age of ninety-two. The causes which enfeebled the stalwart frame of his more noted son, and made his last illness fatal, were undoubtedly the injuries which he received in his endeavors to protect the morals and the property of his people from the white outlaws and desperadoes who formerly infested the Reserve. It is somewhat remarkable that an Iroquois chief should, in our peaceful time and among the quiet and law-respecting people of Canada, die from the effect of wounds received from his enemies of the European race, as

doubtless many of his predecessors had died in the fiercer days of old. But the conditions were strangely reversed. The conflict was still one of civilization with barbarism; but in this case Indian civilization stood at bay with White savagery, and conquered in the end, though at the expense of a noble life.

Chief George Henry Martin Johnson—as his name is recorded in full—was born on the 7th of

name of Martin, and had some strain of European blood, derived from the marriage of an Indian chief, in former days, with an active white girl, adopted into a Mohawk household. None the less it was known as one of the fifty noble families of the Iroquois confederacy, descended from the fifty great chiefs who, about the middle of the fifteenth century, under the leadership of Hiawatha, framed that confederacy, and thus

founded an Indian state which was for a long time the dominant power on our continent north of Mexico. During the American war of independence, this confederacy, in the clash of stronger forces, was for a time broken up. At the close of that war Brant and his followers, comprising the greater portion of the Iroquois people, left their ancient abodes on the south side of the lakes, and withdrew to Canada. The government for which they had fought gave them lands along the Grand River, from its source to its mouth; and here, just a hundred years ago, they re-established their league, and rekindled its council fire. The laws and policy framed by Hiawatha and his associates, more than four centuries ago, are still in force among their descendants in this district. The territory has shrunk, by many sales, made at the well-meant instance of the protecting government, to an extent of little more than fifty thousand acres, with a population of some three thousand souls. But in this small domain the chiefs are still elected, the councils are still conducted, and the civil policy is decided, as nearly as possible, by the rules of their ancient league. Not many persons are aware that there exists in the heart of Canada this relic of the oldest constitutional government of America—a free commonwealth, older than any in Europe, except those of England and Switzerland and perhaps

two small semi-independent republics which lurk in the fastnesses of the Pyrenees and the Apennines.

Chief John S. Johnson was in his way an educated man. He had learned to read and write, but only in the Mohawk language, as it was written by the missionaries. He was determined that his son should have better advantages than he had enjoyed, and accordingly sent him



G. H. M. Johnson

Onwanonsyshon 2. Chief

October, 1816, at what is now known as Bow Park, then a part of the Grand River Reserve, where his parents resided. Of his father, an eminent war-chief and orator of the Six Nations, bore a notable part as a military leader in the war of 1812, some mention has already been made. On the mother's side the boy's lineage was, according to Indian notions, still more distinguished. Her family had taken the English