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THE
HO-DE'-NO-SAU-NEE

THE CONFEDERACY

OF THE

IROQUOIS

[THE SIX NATIONS]

A POEM

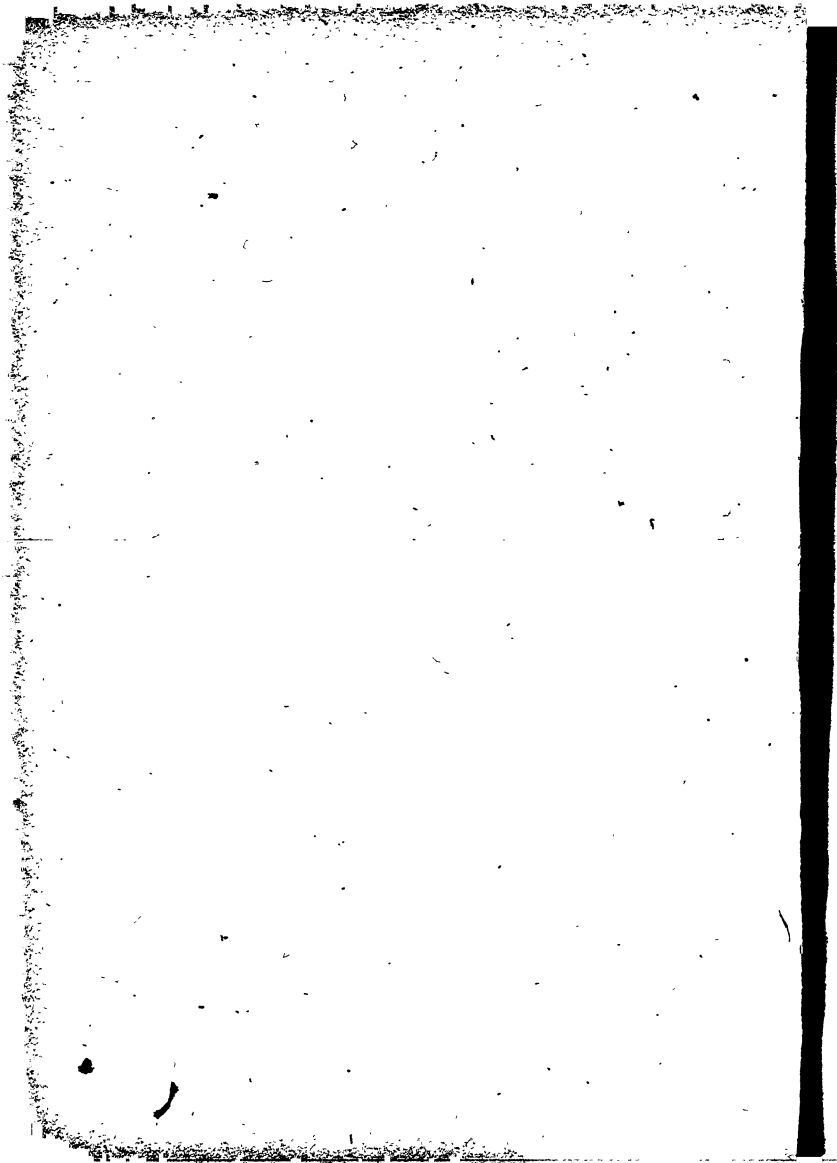
BY

HARRIET MAXWELL CONVERSE

NEW YORK & LONDON
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

The Knickerbocker Press

1884



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THE
HO-DE'-NO-SAU-NEE.

THE CONFEDERACY OF THE IRIQUOIS.

[THE SIX NATIONS.]

“ Ah ! it grieves my heart when I look around and see the situation of my people, in old times united and powerful, now divided and feeble. I feel sorry for my nation ! When I am gone to the other world, when the Great Spirit calls me away, who can take my place among my people ! Many years have I guided the Nation ! ”

[From the appeal made by Red Jacket (Sa-go-ye-wa-tha) to the Council of the Six Nations, after having been deposed as ruler and Chief of the Senecas, to which honor he was right-fully restored.]

Sa-go-ye-wa-tha, sage and warrior,
Legislator and commander,
In the harmony of freedom
From no vulgar race descended;

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HO-DE'-NO-SAU-NEE.

Noble was thy grave demeanor,
Great in action, wise in council !
By thy ancient rights of honor,
Unto fear thou wert a foeman !
Regal in thy passion's vengeance,
When with hostile fury burning,
Orator and fearless warrior,
In the sternest mould of Nature
Thou wert in thy birthright monarch
Of thy glorious battle scars !

Stoic, in humiliation
In thy fortitude exalted,
With thy soul apart communing.
Merciful was thy compassion.
In thy heart, all life's emotions
Gracious were by touch of pity,
Chastened were by love fraternal,
When in tenderness deploring
All the sorrows of thy people !

Logan, Brandt, and Shenandoah
Were the kin-folk of thy forests ;
Mohawks and the On-on-da-gas,
Senecas and the Oneidas,
Cayugas and the Tus-ca-ro-ras !
Bold and brave and valiant hunters
Chiefs and Orators and Sachems—
Loyal keepers of the faith—
Of the race who smoked the peace-pipe
By thy wigwams and thy lodges !

Iroquois—with laws unwritten—
Though thy Sachems had no cities,
And no temples thy religion,
Though thy league for secret records
Had in art no pompous structure
Rearing glories to its name ;
Beautiful thy simple fabric.
In its grandeur was inwoven
With the brotherhood of union.

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HO-DE'-NO-SAU-NEE.

All its covenants made sacred
By the calumet of peace !

Beautiful thy humble homage,
For the blessed benedictions,
Of the changes of the seasons,
In their endless alternations
In thy mid-vaies and thy mountains
When the draperies of Spring-time
Wrought the vestments of the Summer
On the pines and oaks inlocking
All the elm trees and the maples !

Beautiful were thy thanksgivings
To the Giver of thy harvests,
When, in gratitude of offerings,
In thy frequent rites avowing
All the mercies of His blessing
In thy festivals of planting
To the teeming earth committing.

For its nourishing unfolding,
All the seed growths of thy Autumn !

Beautiful thy meditations
In thy consecrated forests,
Fragrant in their odorous incense
When—though groping in the darkness—
Thou wert lifted up and strengthened,
In thy earnest firm endeavor,
Nearer drawn to one Great Spirit
In thy ardor of devotion ;
Wiser than the Greeks or Romans
In the godly inspiration
That the Deity hath given
To all hearts of human kind !

In the fullness of his knowledge
Faith sustains the Christian martyr;
Thou, enduring keenest torture,
Worshipping at verdant altars
In the pathos of thy trusting,

In thy natural religion
Nearer were to God's own Presence,
Through thy dim divine monitions,
Listening to the golden whispers
Of the Spirit's voice, revealing
To thy human souls thy God!

Iroquois ! departed people !—
Children of our living foliage—
Victims of successful warfare
In the viewless snare of Fate ;
Not in servitude's oppression,
Not by power or subjugation,
Yielded thou thy lakes and rivers
And the rugged untilled borders
Of the confines of thy lands !
By thy haughty spirit fearless
In the domains of thy fathers,
In thy right of tributation,
Thou wert passive in submitting
To the light of peace that blighted.

HO-DE'-NO-SAU-NEE.

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In its withering embrace,
• All the years of thy duration
In the thraldom and the shackles
Of the boundaries of man !

Iroquois ! thou wasted people !
All thy council fires extinguished,
Waiting not, thy hapless nation
Knoweth not the hope expectant
Of their lights and kindling fires !
In the boundless limitation
Of Time's great eternal shadows
Thy sun behind the hills is rested
In its everlasting west !

And of thy departed pageants
Who unto the distant ages,
And the centuries in waiting,
Will reveal the voiceless record
Of thy warlike expeditions ?
Thy nativity of kindred ?

And thy lonely desolations?
When by Time—in flight enfolded—
Unanswering in its strange mutations,
Thy once noble mighty nation
Hath forever lost its place!

Ah! belovéd Country,
In thy blesséd land of beauty,
In thy poetry of kindred,
In the beauties of tradition,
May the writers of thy verses
In thy scenes of sylvan pageants
Sing in euphonies of praises
All the legends of this people
In the loftiest of lays!

On thy ever-flowing rivers,
Where their tuneful names are written,
Symphonies, bequeathed in rhythm,
Sing unto thy fertile valleys—
To thy pensive listening valleys—

Enchanted in the lovely lore—
While upon their placid bosoms
Dream the themes of lulling lyrics
In the undertunes of sound !
Courteous elm-trees, and the maples,
Gracious in the rapturous sunlight,
Bending to thy peaceful meadows
Whisper, in their soft vibrations,
Of their generous hunting grounds !

Where their battle-cries resounded,
In the savage repetitions
Of their congregated numbers,
All thy harvests, rich, abundant,
In fruitful plenty crown thy land !
Where the dirges of their death-songs
In the echoes solemn linger,
And thy yielding fields are sunny,
Ploughshares, in their loamy furrows,
In a mournful resurrection

Turn their rusted-headed arrows
To the everlasting skies !

'Neath the oaks and solemn pine-trees—
Lithe, and tall, and scarred, and glorious
In their sympathetic shade—
Swift of foot, with council tokens
Signalled by their belts of wampum,
Sped their messengers of warfare
And their summoners of law !
Gone for ever are the forests,
Like their unremembered people,
Lavished in the broadened pathways
Of the whirls of loud confusion !
Silent now the singing bowstring,
Sheathed for ever are its arrows
Quivered in the hush of Time !
In their trails abide thy highways,
In the tumult of thy traffic,
To processions of progression

Opening wide their gates !

When to thee, beloved country,
And thy blessed land of beauty,
In the records of recession
History opens wide its pages,
Let thy gracious men of letters,
In the scenes of human conflict,
Reproduce this sorrowed people
In their virtues of affection !
In the pathos of relation,
Tell to future generations
All the valor of the red man
In the language of his nation !
In the symmetry of Mohawk
And its glory of religion
When translated in its grandeur
By its ready worded warrior
The Tha-yeu-da-në-gë-a ! *

* Brandt, who translated and published in the Mohawk tongue, the Gospel of St. Mark, and the Book of Common Prayer.

In the On-on-da-gas learning
And its fluency of tongue !
In the Senecas high sounding,
And eloquence of speech !
In Oneida's whispering softness
And its harmony of tune !
In the pathos of Cayuga,
In emotions of its vengeance
In the sad retaliation
Of the mourning * Tah-gah-jute !
All were people of our forests !
All were people of our valleys !
In their council fires were kindled—
Paling in their dying—embers
Where dear Liberty was nurtured,
In its first creative breathings,
On our flowery fragrant sod !
In the poetry of Nature,
Mournful are their mute petitions
In the everlasting silence .

* Logan.

Following fast each passing day !

Will no faithful stone, recording—
In the monumental glory
Of its pale historic marble—
All the bravery of their birthright,
Lift unto the gaze of ages
All their storied power and honor ?
Will their legends and traditions
Go untuned in songs of nations ?
Or, enshrouded in a darkness,
In their natal earth embosomed,
Will, in sorrow, all this people,
In dim sepulchre unnoted,
Yield their ashes to oblivion
And to silence yield their names ?