

# THE HIGHWAY OF THE OTTAWA

BY  
T. W. EDWIN SOWTER



Reprinted from "Papers and Records of The Ontario  
Historical Society."

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## THE HIGHWAY OF THE OTTAWA.

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The Highway of the Ottawa! What pleasure it is to give rein to the imagination and endeavor to reconstruct this old waterway as it appeared in the days of Champlain! What a glorious revelation it must have been to that grand old Frenchman when for the first time he passed up between the shores of the Ottawa! Unblemished by the arts of civilization, how appealing to the eye of the painter or poet must have been the majestic splendor of the savage wilderness! The shores of our great river, bordered by a vast primeval forest and chafed by the resistless rush of mighty falls and foaming rapids, where malignant and fierce-eyed Manitous and Okies glared out of their leafy lairs at the strange men with the pale faces, and the voice of the great Oki of our own Chaudiere Falls roared out his thunderous protest against the advance of a new culture upon his ancient domain.

How changed is all this to-day. The forest has almost disappeared before the axe and the brand, and in its place are green fields and prosperous towns. The voice of the locomotive has frightened the lives out of the malignant spirits and made them seek a more congenial habitat. Even the oki of "The Big Kettle" has lost prestige, as he now receives offerings of sawdust, instead of tobacco, as in the old days.

Our written history of the Ottawa begins with Champlain in 1613; but, long before European contact, the Indians themselves had prepared for us priceless ethnic records of their activities on the Ottawa, and anyone that wishes may read them to-day. These curious old manuscripts are no less than their ancient camping grounds, beach workshops and burial places that lie scattered along the shores of the Ottawa in great profusion. Here, by the old fire-places, where the fires have died out and the hearths grown cold, and their occupants long since departed, we may read much concerning the lives and activities of a now vanished people, before the coming of the white man. The Indians have also left records, in their places of sepulture, that reveal to us much of their past. In answer to the question as to what the camp-site reveals, it may be said that you find there various forms of arrowhead with which the Indian killed his game; the large arrowhead-shaped flint knife with which his better half skinned and cut it up; and the fragments of the earthen pot in which she cooked it for her lord and master.

The writer has in his collection the contents of a single grave found on Aylmer Island. The occupant was well provided with a plentiful sup-

ply of this world's goods, from an Indian standpoint. He had with him, among other things, an iron tomahawk of French make, a small copper kettle, a bone harpoon, three knives and five crooked knives. Among other things that his friends had put into his kit for his trip to the happy hunting ground, was a quantity of fringe made out of a white woman's hair. He also had with him a bone arrowhead that had been driven completely through a segment of his lumbar vertebrae, piercing the spinal chord and still remaining in position. Now, it seems easy to read this Indian's story. At some time in his career he had scalped a white woman, and used her hair for his personal adornment; but later on he had got what was coming to him—so to speak; for that identical portion of his transfixing backbone is at present reposing in the writer's cabinet, and it shows conclusively that its owner died by violence—and served him right.

For the benefit of those who take an interest in the ethnic history of the Ottawa and who may desire to do a little original investigation on their own behalf, a list of the principal camp-sites and burial places, of the Indians, between Ottawa and the Chats Falls, may be of some little service. They are as follows:

**Gilmour's Mills**—Mr. R. H. Haycock, of Ottawa, reports that in 1859-60 his father, the late Edward Haycock, built a residence on the site of Gilmour's Mill, in Hull. While making excavations for the foundation of a summer house, the workmen laid bare several ash-beds at a depth of from two to three feet below the surface. Amongst other things these beds contained Indian pottery in great abundance. It was customary with the Huron-Iroquois to place their fires in pits, which doubtless accounts for the pottery being found at such a depth.

**Gravel Pit, Laurier Ave., Hull**—One may observe, on approaching Hull, by the Alexandra bridge, an extensive gravel pit, between the E. B. Eddy Co's sulphide mill and the end of the bridge, and between Laurier Ave. and the river. This is the place from which the late Edward Haycock procured sand for building purposes on the eastern and western blocks of the departmental buildings at Ottawa. During the excavation of this bank a great many Indian relics were discovered, such as women's knives, arrowheads, tomahawks and pottery, but no description of the pottery is obtainable. Here, according to white and red tradition, many bloody encounters took place between parties ascending or descending the river.

**Squaw Bay, Tetreauville (Que.)**—The western shore of this bay is littered with worked flints, especially the southerly end which juts out into the river.

**Bell's Bay (Que.)**—This bay, near Fraser's Mill, is an old camp-site, where the writer found a stone celt and arrowheads. There is a considerable quantity of worked flints littered about the shore. A compacted mass of clay and sand, mixed with worked flints, beneath an old oak stump, about two feet in diameter, had been laid bare by the river. It was an old stump of a large tree, yet the arrow-makers of Bell's Bay

had flaked their flints where it stood long before that oak was even an acorn.

**Hotel Victoria (Aylmer, Que.)**—On the low gravelly flat, just west of the hotel wharf, the writer picked up a very finely made celt, and between that and the outlet of the creek several broken ones. Large fragments of unworked flint, ready for the arrow-maker, were also observed.

**Newman's Bay (Que.)**—This bay—called by Ottawa people *lecho Bay*—just below Queen's Park, has yielded more unworked flint than any other beach workshop on the Quebec side of Lake Deschênes. Some few fragments of pottery have also been found.

**Pointe aux Pins.**—This place was so named by the old voyageurs, and by this name it has always been known to the people of Aylmer, Que. As the pine forest has long since disappeared and a solitary elm stands out in bold relief on the shore, a wiseacre from Ottawa, some years ago, renamed the spot One-tree Point. It is needless to say that this changing of place names increases the difficulties in the way of historical and ethnological investigation, and should be discredited. Place names are sacred and should not be tampered with. However, Pointe aux Pins, which is now the site of Queen's Park, yields worked and unworked flints and arrowheads. One of the latter, picked up by the writer, is apparently very old, as a portion has been broken off, revealing a thick rind of weathered surface of a light buff color. This arrowhead is unique amongst those found on Lake Deschênes. Only one fragment of a similar kind of flint, unworked, is all that the writer has been able to discover, and this was at a spot higher up the river and not amongst the refuse in any of the beach workshops on the lake.

**Powell's Bay (Que.)**—Large pieces of unworked flint, together with flint chippings, have been observed at this bay and along the shore for a considerable distance up the lake.

**Raymond's Point**—This point is on the Ontario shore of Lake Deschênes, opposite Aylmer, and is by far the largest beach workshop and camp-site on the lake. From the point to upward of one hundred yards westward, as far as Smith's house, the bare calciferous sandstone shore is thickly strewn with worked flint and chippings of the same material. Arrowheads of several makes have been found at this point. Some have been fabricated from the black flint that is found, in great abundance, in the Trenton limestone at Hull and Ottawa, and are consequently of domestic origin; while others are of a lighter color and are similar to those found in the Huron country. Women's knives, celts, or stone tomahawks, are also found. A woman's knife picked up at this place by Mr. Jacob Smith, of the Interior Department at Ottawa, was made of dark Trenton flint. A similar and beautifully finished flint knife, presented to the writer by Mr. Louis Leroy, of Bryson., and found at that place, is of light colored flint and is evidently of foreign make. Fragments of pottery are frequently picked up as they are washed by the rains out of the dark sandy loam at high water mark, above the rocky

beach. From what has been seen of these fragments the pottery seems to be referable to three distinct cultures—Algonkin, Huron and Iroquois; but this is only conjecture, as not enough has been procured to settle the matter.

**Snake Island Point.**—This point is high, dry and flat-topped, and admirably fitted by nature for a camp-site. On the side next to Snake Bay, to the south, it is fringed with large boulders, among which the ground is smothered with flint flakings. Geo. R. Fox, of Appleton, Wis., informs the writer that he has investigated numerous village sites, but does not recall one where he discovered any amount of chips near large stones, which would indicate the selection of such spots as workshop sites. Since hearing from Mr. Fox, the writer has often wondered whether these flakings may not have accumulated about the boulders before the wash of heavy rains, but has dismissed this idea for the reason that rain floods could not have moved them.

**Noël's Point.**—This point is only a short distance higher up the lake shore. Here we also get the boulders with the flint flakings lying about them, as at Snake Island Point.

**Flat Rock.**—On the 24th May, 1897, Aldos and David Pariseau discovered a cache of bullets at Flat Rock, near Wilson's Bluff, and just above the summer residence of the late Mr. A. H. Taylor, in the township of South March, Ont. They were found in the sand, in a few inches of water quite close to the shore, and eight hundred were taken from the cache, together with an Indian pipe with the head of some animal moulded or carved on the bowl. Some of these bullets are now in the writer's collection and would run about twenty-five to the pound.

**Pointe à la Bataille.**—This point is now shown on our maps as Lapotie's Point, a name of recent origin, and doubtless conferred upon it by some ox-witted yokel, who thought it should bear the name of its latest occupant rather than that which probably commemorated some tragic incident of a bygone age. The French-Canadian river-men, however, with much better taste, still retain the name by which it was known to the old voyageurs. Flints are found at this point, both worked and otherwise. Several years ago, Joseph Leclair, of Aylmer, discovered a large cache of bullets at Pointe à la Bataille. Mr. Leclair brought away nearly half a bagful, without exhausting the find. It does not appear credible that so large a quantity of ammunition would have been "cached" by hunters; but, judging from the name of the place, one inclines rather to the supposition that this store had some connection, in the past, with the movements of war-parties, either white or red, operating along Lake Deschênes.

Sand Bay, at the outlet of Constance Creek, in the township of Bolton, Carleton Co., Ont., is a deep indentation of the southern shore line of the Ottawa, extending inland about a mile. The entrance, or river front of the bay, is terminated on the east by Pointe à la Bataille and on the west by Big Sand Point.

**Big Sand Point.**—This point is a large dune of drifting sand with here and there a stunted pitch pine and in sheltered places a luxuriant growth of blueberries and poison-ivy. In the summer of 1912 one of the writer's sons discovered an Indian fire-place right on the top of this dune, on the side fronting on the river, in a clear space fully exposed to the action of the winds. The fire-place was about nine or ten feet in circumference and was filled with fine charcoal and sand to the level of the drifting sands of the dune. Overlying this ash-bed was an array of pottery fragments that had the appearance of having been arranged thereon for the inspection of future generations. The fire-place was dug out by hand and pieces of pottery were found all the way down to a depth of about two feet, but the bottom of the pit was not reached. The pottery is either Huron or Iroquois, but the writer is uncertain as to which of the two cultures it is referable.

William M. Beauchamp\* is of the opinion that "while the richer Iroquois obtained brass kettles quickly from the whites, their poorer friends continued the primitive art till the beginning of the 18th century at least."

In view of the above statement it appeared at first sight as if this old fire-place bore evidences of the last domestic catastrophe in an Indian household, about two hundred years ago, and that these evidences had not been obliterated by snow or rain or drifting sand in all that time, for this seemed to be the story: Many years ago, when this was an Indian camp, some bustling Indian woman, in hurrying up to get the dinner, snatched a pot of boiling water off the fire, burnt her fingers, dropped the pot, broke it, spilt the water and put out the fire, blamed somebody or something else for the accident and left her broken crockery and her fire-place with the orenda knocked out of them and a tabu on both. After a brief consideration, however, this theory was dismissed on account of its improbability for obvious reasons. A more reasonable supposition seemed to be that a Huron or Iroquois fire-pit, originally two or three feet in depth and filled with ashes, sand and broken kitchen utensils, had been abandoned at some remote period; and that since that time the winds had carried away some of the sand from the top of the dune, together with some of the upper part of the fire-place, thus winnowing the pottery fragments and leaving them accumulated as they were found.

According to the testimony of old residents in the neighborhood, human bones, and in one instance an entire human skeleton, have been washed out of the sands near this dune.

Many uncanny and gruesome stories are associated with the sand mound. They have been transmitted from father to son, from the time of the old French voyageurs.

**Wendigo Mound.**—According to one of these traditions this sand mound was, in the old days, occupied by a family of Wendigos. These

\*Earthenware of the New York Aborigines. Bulletin of the New York State Museum. Vol. 5, No. 22, October 1898, p. 80.

people were a source of constant annoyance to the dwellers on Lake Deschênes, but more particularly to an Algonkin camp on Sand Bay, quite close to the headquarters of these malignant beings. The old man, who possessed the gigantic proportions of his class, was frequently seen wading about in the waters of the bay, when on foraging expeditions after Indian children, of whose flesh, it is said, he and his family were particularly fond. The family consisted of the old man and his wife and one son. The bravest Indian warriors had, on several occasions, ambushed and shot at the old man and woman without injuring either of them; but, by means of sorcery, they eventually succeeded in kidnapping the boy, when his parents were away from home. Holding the young hopeful as a hostage, they managed to dictate terms to his father and mother and finally got rid of the whole family.

The writer heard this story for the first time one night while camping at the Chats Fall. It was told at the camp fire by a half-breed descendant of the Indians who had the unpleasantness with the Wendigoes. Though far from believing that any sane Indian of the old school would have laid violent hands on even a young Wendigo, the writer is quite satisfied that had one of those legendary monsters of the American wilderness loomed suddenly out of the dark shadows of the forest and approached the camp fire, the poor half-breed who was "spinning the yarn" would have taken to his canoe without a moment's hesitation and left the Wendigo in undisputed possession of the island.

**Fight at Big Sand Point.**—Life on the old Ottawa, during the greater part of the seventeenth century, was always strenuous, and frequently dangerous. On this rugged old trade route, during the French régime, the fur-traders from the interior, both white and red, experienced many vicissitudes while conveying the products of the chase to the trading posts on the St. Lawrence. Shadowy traditions of those days of racial attrition have been transmitted from father to son, from the old *coureurs de bois* and their Indian confreres, to their half-breed descendants of the present day. These traditions account for the human bones washed out some years ago at the foot of the old Indian portage at the Chats Falls, and those that lie scattered about at Big Sand Point, lower down the river; also, for quite a number of brass kettles found at one time near the mouth of Constance Creek; for the Indian burials on Aylmer Island, as well as for the presence of arrowheads, stone celts, flint knives and other native implements in the gravel beds at the foot of the *Chaudière*; and, without pausing to consider whether these relics of a departed people are not the ordinary litter of Indian camp-sites, or the disinterred bones from Indian burial places, tradition, as usual, takes charge of them as the ominous tokens of a period of violence.

A great many years ago, so the story goes, a party of French fur-traders, together with a number of friendly Indians, possibly Algonkin and Huron allies, went into camp one evening at *Pointe à la Bataille*. Fires were lighted, kettles were slung and all preparations made to pass the night in peace and quietness. Soon, however, the lights from other

camp fires began to glimmer through the foliage, on the opposite shore of the bay, and a reconnaissance presently revealed a large war-party of Iroquois in a barricaded encampment on the Wendigo Mound at Big Sand Point. Well skilled as they were in all the artifices of forest warfare, the French and their Indian companions were satisfied that something would happen before morning. It was inevitable that the coming night would be crowded with such stirring incidents as would leave nothing to be desired in the way of excitement. There lay the Iroquois camp, with its fierce denizens crouched like wolves in their lair; though buried in the heart of the enemy's country, yet self-reliant in the pride of their past warlike achievements, whose military strategy had rendered them as invulnerable as the gloom of the oncoming thundercloud, and as inexorable as the fate of the forest monarch that is blasted by a stroke of its lightning.

Now, the golden rule on the Indian frontier in those strenuous times was to deal with your neighbor as you might be pretty sure he would deal with you, if he got the chance. Of course it was customary among the Indians to heap coals of fire on the head of an enemy; but as it was the usual practice, before putting on the coals, to bind the enemy to some immovable object, such as a tree or a stout picket, so that he was unable to shake them off, the custom was not productive of much brotherly love. Moreover, when the success of peace overtures could be assured only to the party that could bring the greater number of muskets into the negotiations, it will be readily understood why the French, who were in the minority, did not enter into diplomatic relations with the enemy. On the contrary, it was resolved to fight, as soon as the opposing camp was in repose, and attempt a decisive blow from a quarter whence it would be least expected, thus forestalling an attack upon themselves, which might come at any time before the dawn. The French and their allies knew very well that if their plans miscarried and the attack failed, the penalty would be death to most of their party, and that, in the event of capture, they would receive as fiery and painful an introduction to the world of shadows as the leisure or limited means of their captors might warrant.

Towards midnight, the attacking party left *Pointe à la Bataille* and proceeded stealthily southward, in their canoes, along the eastern rim of Sand Bay, crossed the outlet of Constance Creek and landing on the western shore of the bay advanced towards Big Sand Point through the pine forest that clothed the intervening sand hills, as it does to-day. This long detour, of about two miles, was no doubt a necessity, as, on still nights the most trifling sounds, especially such as might have been produced by paddles accidentally touching the sides of canoes, are echoed to considerable distances over the bay.

The advance of the expedition was the development of Indian strategy; for, by getting behind the enemy, it enabled the French and their allies to rush his barricades and strike him in the back, while his sentinels and outliers were guarding against any danger that might approach from the river front.

The attack was entirely successful, for it descended upon and enveloped the sleeping camp like a hideous nightmare. Many of the Iroquois died in their sleep, while the rest of the party perished to a man in the wild confusion of a midnight massacre.

Such is the popular tradition of the great fight at the Wendigo Mound at Big Sand Point, and the bones that are found in the drifting sands at that place are said to be the remains of friend and foe who fell in that isolated and unrecorded struggle.

This story seems to carry us back to that period of conflict which was inaugurated by the onslaught of the Iroquois upon the Huron towns, which was continued with unparalleled ferocity and terminated only by the merciless destruction of a once powerful nation and the final dispersion of its fugitive remnants, together with such bands of Algonkins as happened to come within the scope of that campaign of extermination. It is supposed that our tradition has reference to one of the many scenes of bloodshed that reddened the frontiers of Canada, while the Confederates were thus making elbow-room for themselves on this continent, and were putting the finishing touches on the tribes to the north of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence. At this time all the carrying-places on our great highway were dangerous, for war parties of fierce invaders held the savage passes of the Ottawa, hovering like malignant okies amidst the spray of wild cataracts and foaming torrents, where they levied toll with the tomahawk and harvested with the scalping-knife the fatal souvenirs of conquest.

**The Chaudière.**—Let us now descend the river, as far as the Chaudière, and we find ourselves once again in the mocassin prints of the Iroquois; for those tireless scalp hunters were quite at home on the Ottawa, as well as on its northern tributaries. War expeditions of the Confederates frequently combined business with recreation. They would leave their homes on the Mohawk, or adjacent lakes, and strike the trail to Canada, hunt along the Rideau Valley until the spring thaws set in, and manage to reach the Ottawa in time for the opening of navigation. Then they loitered about the passes of the Chaudière and waited, like Wilkins Micawber, for something to turn up.

While waiting thus for their prey to break cover, from up or down the river, they devoted their spare time to various occupations. To the oki, whose thunderous voice was heard in the roar of the falls, they made sacrifices of tobacco. While the Mohawks and Onondagas each gave a name to that cauldron of seething water which is known to us as "The Big Kettle," the Mohawks called it Tsitkanajoh, or the "Floating Kettle," while the Onondagas named it Katsidagwehniyoh, or "Chief Council Fire."

Iroquois tradition assigns to Squaw Bay, called also Cache Bay, at Tetreauville, the reputation of having been one of the favorite lurking places of these war-parties. It must have been, in those days, an ideal spot for an ambush or concealed camp, as it occupied, for the purposes of river piracy, as commanding a position on the old trade route as does

one of our present day toll-gates for controlling the traffic on a turnpike road.

Joe Canoe, the chief of the Dumoine River Iroquois, told one of the writer's sons that in the old days his people were in the habit of hiding in Squaw or Cache Bay and capturing canoes coming down with furs or going up with merchandise. They plundered the canoes and scalped their occupants. It is also said that Brigham's Creek, called also Brewery Creek, a narrow channel of the Ottawa, was the old Indian portage route for overcoming the rapids of the Chaudière. It may be seen by glancing at a map of the city of Hull, that parties of Algonkins or Hurons, as the case may have been, upon emerging on the main river at the head of this portage, were liable at any time to receive a warm welcome from some surprise-party of Iroquois visitors at the Squaw Bay camping ground. If descending the rapids of the Little Chaudière, they faced a far worse predicament, as, unable to escape or defend themselves in the swift current, they would have been caught like passing flies in a spider's web.

It is said that Indian cunning was at length successful in evolving a plan to outwit the military strategy of the Iroquois. As the old portage route had become dangerous it was resolved to have an alternative one. In ascending the Ottawa, this new portage started from the western shore of Brigham's Creek at a point now occupied by the International Cement Works. It continued thence in a westerly direction, skirting the foot of the mountain and passed down Breckenridge's Creek to the outlet of that stream into Lake Deschênes. It was rather a long portage of about a dozen miles; but Algonkin and Huron had learned in the school of bitter experience that, in their case, the longest way round was the shortest way home. An aged squaw, who lived in Aylmer many years ago, spoke of a similar forest trail that extended, in the early days, from a point on the Gatineau, near the site of Chelsea, thence by way of Kingsmere to a point on Lake Deschênes, now occupied by the town of Aylmer.

**Ossuary at Ottawa.**—Residents of the Capital will be surprised to learn that a Feast of the Dead, probably similar to that witnessed by Brébeuf at Ossossane, was once held on the spot now occupied by the Capital brewery, within the angle formed by the north line of Wellington and the west line of Bay streets. The proof may be found in an article in the Canadian Journal, Vol. 1, 1852-1853, by the late Dr. Edward Van Courtland, which describes an Indian burying ground and its contents at Bytown (Ottawa) in 1843.

Dr. Van Courtland states that in 1843 some workmen, who were digging sand for mortar for the old suspension bridge, unearthed a large quantity of human bones. He immediately hurried to the spot and found that the contents of an Indian burying ground were being uncovered. The doctor continues: "Nothing possibly could have been more happily chosen for sepulture than the spot in question; situated on a projecting point of land directly in rear of the encampment, at a carrying-place, and

about half a mile below the mighty cataract of the Chaudière, it at once demonstrated a fact handed down to us by tradition, that the aborigines were in the habit, when they could, of burying their dead near running waters. The very oldest settlers, including the Patriarch of the Ottawa, the late Philemon Wright, and who had located nearby some thirty years before,\* had never heard of this being a burying place, although Indians existed in considerable numbers about the locality when he dwelt in the forest, added to the fact that a huge pine tree growing directly over one of the graves, was conclusive evidence of its being used as a place of sepulture long ere the white man in his progressive march had desolated the hearths of the untutored savage." After two doys' digging the results were as follows:

"One large, apparently common grave, containing the vestiges of about twenty bodies of various ages, a goodly share of them being children, together with portions of the remains of two dogs' heads; the confused state in which the bones were found showed that no care whatever had been taken in burying the original owners, and a question presented itself as to whether they might not have all been thrown indiscriminately into one pit at the same time, having fallen victims to some epidemic, or beneath the hands of some other hostile tribe; nothing, however, could be detected on the skulls to indicate that they fell by the tomahawk, but save sundry long bones, a few pelvi, and six perfect skulls the remainder crumbled into dust on exposure to the air; in every instance the bones were deeply colored from red hematite which the aborigines used in painting, or rather in bedaubing their bodies, falling in the form of a deposit on them when the flesh had become corrupted. The material appears to have been very lavishly applied from the fact of the sand which filled the crania being entirely colored by it. A few implements and weapons of the very rudest description were discovered, to wit: 1st, a piece of gneiss about two feet long, tapering, and evidently intended as a sort of war-club; it is in size and shape not unlike a policeman's staff. 2nd, a stone gouge, very rudely constructed of fossiliferous limestone; it is about ten inches long, and contains a fossil leptina on one of its edges; it is used, I lately learned from an Indian chief, for skinning the beaver. 3rd, a stone hatchet of the same material. 4th, a sandstone boulder weighing about four pounds; it was found lying on the sternum of a chief of gigantic stature, who was buried apart from the others, and who had been walled around with great care. The boulder in question is completely circular and much in the shape of a large ship biscuit before it is stamped or placed in the oven; its use was, after being sewed in a skin bag, to serve as a corselet and protect the wearer against the arrows of an adversary. In every instance the teeth were perfect and not one unsound one was to be detected, at the same time they were all well worn down by trituration, it being a well known fact that in Council the Indians are in the habit of using their lower jaw like a ruminating animal, which fully accounts for the peculiarity. There were no arrowheads or other weapons discovered."

\* Philemon Wright, with 25 followers arrived at the site of the present City of Hull, on the 7th of March, 1806.

It will be seen from the foregoing that the worthy doctor had witnessed the excavation of a small ossuary, bone-pit or communal grave, such as are found in the Huron country in western Ontario. When the doctor raises the question as to whether the bodies had not all been "thrown indiscriminately into one pit at the same time," he suggests a mode of sepulture that was actually observed by Brébeuf at the Huron Feast of the Dead at Ossossané in 1636.

**Ossuary on Aylmer Island.**—Another small ossuary was uncovered some years ago, on Aylmer Island, called also Lighthouse Island, in Lake Deschênes, when the foundation for the new lighthouse was being excavated. The writer was not present at the exhumation of its contents, but the light-keeper, Mr. Frank Boucher, informed him that the skeletons were all piled together, indiscriminately. It is difficult to estimate the number of bodies interred in this grave, but it yielded about a wagon load of bones. No entire skulls were found but the writer observed that the teeth in all the jawbones were sound, in some cases being worn down quite flat without the least sign of decay. Some single graves have also been found on this island. The presence of this ossuary is also at once suggestive of the celebration, on Aylmer Island, of the weird mortuary rite called the Feast of the Dead.

Embowered in the solemn grandeur of a mighty forest of gloomy pines, old Lac Chaudière—our Lake Deschênes—was a fitting theatre for that weird ceremonial. Resting on the old Algonkin camping ground at Pointe aux Pins—now Queen's Park—some roving *coureur de bois* might have seen this great sheet of water fading away into the vast green ocean of foliage to the south, and witnessed from his point of vantage the uncanny incidents of the savage drama. From various points on the lake he might have seen, converging on the island, great war canoes freighted with the living and the dead, the sad remnants of a passing race. He might have heard the long drawn-out wailing cries of the living, as they floated out across the water, outrivalling the call of the loon, or the dismal and prolonged howl of the wolf, as they echoed through the arches of the forest; and, as the island rose before his vision, tenanted with its grotesque assemblage of dusky forms, engaged in the final rite of sepulture, he might have mused upon the mutability of human life, in its application to the red denizens of the wilderness, whether in the extinction of a clan, or the dissolution of a tribe or confederation.

But where, to-day, are these people whose reverence for their dead was one of the first rays of light stealing in upon their darkness from the coming morning of a new day? Who felt even in the wind as it played over their brows when spent with toil the caress of a good spirit? Who, longing for that which they knew not, made gods of the blind forces of nature and reached out to them, in their direst need, for assistance and consolation? Did they migrate, finally, to join their kindred in their distant resting places? Did they fade away, by adoption, into other tribes? Or, were they absorbed by the red cloud of massacre, to disappear forever in the darksome shadow of the illimitable wilderness?