

AN AMERICAN INDIAN PARLIAMENT

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF A STAY AMONG THE IROQUOIS OF CANADA

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IN the south-eastern corner of Ontario, Canada, between the towns of Brantford and Caledonia, there lies a beautiful stretch of land called the "Grand River Reservation." This reservation was allotted some seventy years ago by the Canadian Government to the Indian tribes known as the "Six Nations of the Iroquois Indians." Here live, forty-five hundred in number, the decendants of the "Romans of North America." They have long ago ceased to be a terror to the neighboring tribes and to the white settlers. Their chiefs no more assemble for the purpose of discussing war plans, and their warriors have long ago buried their hatchets and tomahawks. They live peaceably, devoted like their white neighbors, to farming and to the manufacture of lacrosse sticks, in which industry they have attained a perfection that can be hardly surpassed.

But in spite of their long intercourse with the white settler, and in spite of all the changes brought about by the advent of the white man, they still cling tenaciously to their old traditions, and the Confederacy which was instituted among them by their traditional legislator, Hiawatha, as early as the sixteenth century, still exists today as their ruling Government. As a matter of fact, the Iroquois Indians of Canada have changed only as far as external appearances and forms of material life are concerned. Otherwise their institutions and customs are the same as they were centuries ago. By far a larger number of them are pagans, who still assemble periodically in their places of worship called "Long-houses" for the purpose of paying homage to their Spirits and Ancestors. These religious gatherings, lasting usually a whole day, are attended even by the most professed Christian members of a tribe, so strong is in the Indian his loyalty to the past. Their ancient clan system is still in a high flourish, and even the long sedentary life, which they have been leading for the last ninety years, could not make them abandon their Secret Societies and their implicit faith in the power of the "medicine man." Above all, their form of Government, whereby all their affairs are arranged and settled by a council of chiefs, still exists with the same definiteness, as in the days when their ancestors dwelt around the Great Lakes. It is especially this highly organized Council of chiefs that makes the Iroquois Indians so prominent