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surface, may not have taken place during this complete reversion of the condition of our planet relative to the sun; but it is morally certain that all those changes, bearing upon the question of man's antiquity, have taken place within this period.

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### MYTHS OF THE IROQUOIS.

MRS. ERMINNIE C. SMITH.

The instinctive desire in man to fathom the great mystery of human life; to solve the enigma of "whence he came and whither he goes;" to comprehend the beginning and history of the dim prehistoric past, and the more undefined future; and to account for the marvels ever presented to his senses, **has** in all times excited the imagination and originated speculation. To account for all the phenomena of life and nature the human mind has seized upon every analogy suggesting the slightest clue to their solution. In the statement of these analogies they have gradually become formulated into tales or accounts of **supposed** events, these only varying with the temperament of the narrator, or the exigencies of the locality, where, oft repeated, they have in time been recorded on the hearts and minds of the people either as myths or folk-lore embodying the fossilized knowledge and ideas of a previous age, misinterpreted perhaps by those who have inherited them.

For the ethnologist who would trace in mythology the growth of the human mind nowhere in this direction is the harvest so rich and over-ripe as among the aborigines of our own country, who have hardly passed the boundaries of the charmed mytheopic age; and among these none are so rich in this lore of "**faded** metaphors" as their highest type, the Iroquois, with whom the language, even, containing this wealth of folk-lore will soon disappear--lost through its contact with American civilization.

To what dignity this folk-lore might have attained had these people been left to reach a lettered civilization for themselves, **we** cannot know; but judging from the history of other peoples, their first chroniclers would have accepted as facts many of these oral traditions, which none could have disproved and much tended to corroborate.

For our grandfather Hih-nu<sup>h</sup>, the Thunderer, say they, was **gifted** with powers which he used solely for the benefit of **mortals**; hand-in-hand with his brother, the West-Wind, he

brought **from** the black clouds vivifying rain, and from his abode under the great **Niagarian** cataract (at that time a mighty cave reaching from shore to shore), he issued forth and with his crashing bolt destroyed the great sea monsters which, poisoning the waters, sent abroad a deadly pestilence; in proof of all this were not the bones of his victims, the giant lizards, often discovered?. Then when this earthly mission of **Hih-nu-h** was accomplished, a powerful current of water destroyed his terrestrial home, the spacious watery cave, and he took up his abode in the sky.

Then came the race of pigmies, small in stature but mighty in skill and deeds, who carved out the beauties of rock, cliff and cave, and also endowed with the mightier power of destroying monster land-animals, which infested the forest, endangering the life of man.

And did not **cliff**, rock and grotto test the skill of that departed race, and did not exhumed bones of giant animals bear as perfect witness to their former existence and power and the truth of this lore, as did the "**Homo diluviæ testis**" of a century ago confirm the story of the deluge?

The historian who treats of Rome does not disdain to tell us that its founder Romulus and his twin brother, were in their infancy thrown into the Tiber by order of Aurelius, but that the gods who had ordained his destiny stopped the river in its course, and sending the she-wolf to nourish the rescued infant, he was preserved to become the founder of Rome and the Roman people.

Josephus tells us that Japhet had seven sons, and from Ivan, the fairest, the Grecians were derived. The Hebrew race, reaching further into the past, claim Adam and Eve as their ancestors.

So, also, the Iroquois has his ideas of an **origin** of the human race, which includes also the creation of the **Spirits** of Good and Evil. It was in the great past when deep waters covered all the earth. The air was filled with birds, and great monsters were in possession of the waters, when a beautiful woman was seen falling from the sky! Then huge ducks gathered in council and resolved to meet this wonderful creature and break the force of her fall. So they arose, and with pinion **over-lap**-ping pinion, unitedly received the dusky burden. Then the monsters of the deep also gathered in council to decide which should receive this celestial being and protect her from the terrors of the water, but none was able except a giant tortoise, who volunteered to endure this lasting **weight** upon his back. There she was gently placed, while he, constantly increasing

in size, soon became a large island. Twin boys were at last **given** to the world's great mother—one being the spirit of **Good**, who made all things good and **caused** the **maize, fruit** and tobacco to grow; the other was the Spirit of **Evil**, who created the thistle and all vermin. Ever the **world was** increasing in size, although occasional **quakings** were **felt, caused** by the **efforts of** the monster **tortise** to stretch **out** his **extensors** or by the contraction of his muscles.

After the lapse of ages from the time of this **general** creation, **Ta-rhu<sup>a</sup>-hia-wah-hu<sup>a</sup>**, the Sky-Holder, **resolved upon** a special creation of a race which should surpass all others in beauty, bravery, and strength; so, from the bosom of the great **island Ta-rhu<sup>a</sup>-hia-wah-hu<sup>a</sup>** brought out the six pairs which were destined to become the greatest of all people.

The Tuscaroras tell us that the first pair were left near a great river, now called the Mohawk. The second **family** was directed to make its home by the side of a big stone. Their descendants were termed the Oneidas. Another pair was **left** on a high hill, and have ever been called the Onondagas, and thus each pair was left with careful instructions, in **different** parts of what is now known as the State of New **York, except** the Tuscaroras, who were taken up the Roanoke river into North Carolina, where **Ta-rhu<sup>a</sup>-hia-wah-hu<sup>a</sup>** also took up his abode, teaching them many useful arts before his departure. This, say they, accounts for the superiority of the Tuscaroras. But each of the six tribes will tell you that his own **was** the favored one with whom Sky-Holder made his terrestrial home, while the Onondagas claim that their possession of the council fire proves them to have been the chosen people.

Later as the numerous **families** became scattered over the state, some lived in localities where the bear was the principal game, and were called from that circumstance the Clan of the **Bear**; others where the beaver were trapped, and they were called the Beaver Clan; and for similar reasons the Snipe, Deer, Wolf, Tortoise and Eel clans received their appellations.

One of the Bear Clan relates that once on a time a sickly old **man** covered with sores entered an Indian **village** where over each wigwam was placed the sign of the **clan of its** possessor, the beaver skin denoting the Beaver, the deer skin the Deer Clan, and so forth. At each of these wigwams had the old man applied in vain for food and a night's lodging, but his repulsive appearance rendered him an **objct** of scorn, and the Wolf, the Tortoise and the Heron had bidden the abject old man to pass on. At length, tired and weary, he arrived at a **wigwam** where a bear skin betokened the **clanship** of its owner. **This**

he found inhabited by a kind hearted woman who immediately refreshed him with food and spread out skins for his bed. Then **she** was instructed by the old man to go in search of certain herbs, which she prepared according to his directions, and through their efficacy he was soon healed. Then he **commanded** that she should treasure up this secret. A few days after he sickened with a fever and again commanded a search for other herbs and was again healed. This being **many** times repeated he at last told his benefactress that his mission was accomplished and that she was now endowed with all the secrets for curing disease in all its forms, and that before her wigwam should grow a hemlock tree whose branches should reach high above all others, to signify that the Bear should take precedence of all other clans, and that she and her clan should increase and multiply.

Iroquois tradition tells us that the sun and moon existed before the creation of the earth, but the stars had all been mortals or favored animals and birds. Curious indeed are the myths regarding these transformations.

Seven little Indian boys were once accustomed to bring at eve their corn and beans to a little mound, upon the top of **which**, after their feast, the sweetest of their singers would **sit** and sing for his mates, who danced around the mound. On **one** occasion they resolved on a more sumptuous feast, and each was to contribute toward a savory soup. But the parents **refused** them the **needed** supplies and they met for a feastless dance. Their heads and hearts grew lighter as they flew around the mound until suddenly the whole company whirled **off** into the air. The inconsolable parents called in vain for **them** to return—it was **too late**. Higher and higher they arose, whirling around their singer until transformed into bright stars they took their places in the firmament where, as the Pleiades, they are dancing still, the brightness of the singer, however, having been dimmed on account of his desire to return to **earth**.

A party of hunters were once in pursuit of a bear, when they were attacked by a monstrous stone giant, and all but three destroyed. The three, together with the bear, were carried by invisible spirits up into the sky, where the bear can still be seen pursued by the first hunter with his bow, the second with the kettle, and third who, farther behind, is gathering sticks. Only in the fall do the arrows of the hunter pierce the bear, when his dripping blood tinges the autumn foliage. Then for a time he is invisible, but afterwards reappears.

An old man, despised and rejected by his people, took his bundle and staff and went up into a high mountain, where he began singing the death-chant. Those below, who were watching him, saw him slowly rising into the air, his chant ever growing fainter and fainter, until it finally ceased as he took his place in the heavens, where his stooping figure, **staff**, and bundle, have ever since been visible, and are pointed out as Na-ge-tci (the old man).

An old woman, gifted with the power of divination, was unhappy because she could not also foretell when the world would come to an end! For this she was transported to the moon, where to this day she is clearly to be seen weaving a forehead strap. Once a month she stirs the boiling kettle of hominy before her, during which occupation the cat ever by her side, unravels her net, and so she must continue until the end of time—for never until then will her work be finished.

As the pole-star was ever the Indian's guide, so the Northern Lights were ever to him the indication of coming events. Were they white, frost; weather would ensue; if yellow, **disease** and pestilence; while red predicted war and bloodshed; and a mottled sky in the spring-time, was ever the harbinger of a good corn season.

When engaged in wars with different nations, the voice of the Echo God served for signals, as it would only respond to the calls of the Iroquois. At the edge of evening it was used by them to call in those who were out on the war-path. When the warrior would whoop the Echo God would take it up and carry it on through the air, their opponents not being able to hear it, as this was the special god of the Six Nations. Therefore when they had gained a great victory a dance was held to give praise to this god. When enemies were killed their victors called out as many times as **there** were persons killed, the cry being Goh-weh! Goh-weh! I'm telling you! These words the Echo God took up and repeated. But if one of their own tribe was killed they called out Oh-weh! Oh-weh! meaning Our own!

After any of these signals were given all assembled together to hold **council** and make arrangements for an attack or pursuit. Then were sent out runners who also proclaimed; but if no response was made by the Echo God it was an omen that they should not start, but they continued calling, and if the god still remained silent a service was held to ask the **cause** of his anger.

When a warfare was finished victoriously a dance was held to the Echo God, and the nations assembled to rejoice, but first

to mourn for the dead and decide on the fate of the captives, As the Echo God was never called upon except in emergencies during warfare, now, since **wars** are over, the feast and dance to the Echo God have ceased to be a part of the Iroquois ceremonies.

A hunter in the woods was once caught in a thunder shower, when he heard a voice calling upon him to follow. This he did until he found himself in the clouds, the height of many trees from the ground, and surrounded by human beings in appearance, with one among them who seemed to be their chief. He was told to look below and tell whether he could discern a huge sea serpent. Replying in the negative, the old man anointed his eyes, after which he could see the monster in the depths below him. They then ordered one of their number to try and kill this enemy to the human race; upon his failing, the hunter was told to accomplish the feat; he accordingly drew his bow and killed the foe. He was then conducted to the place where he was protecting himself from the storm which had now ceased.

This was man's first acquaintance with the Thunder God and his assistants, and by it he learned that they were friendly toward the human race, and protected it from dragons, sea serpents and other enemies.

It was the custom, at that season, for the medicine men to go about demanding gifts of the people, but an icy figure had also appeared demanding a man as a sacrifice; whereupon the Thunder God was appealed to, **who** came to the rescue with his assistants, and chased the figure far into the north, where they doomed the icy demon to remain; and to this day his howling and blustering are still heard, and **when** any venturesome mortal dares to go too far **toward** his abode, his frosty children soon punish the offender. He is termed **Ka-tash-huaht**, or North Wind, and ranks as an evil spirit.

A man, while walking in a forest, saw an unusually large bird covered with a heavily clustered coating of wampum. He immediately informed his people and chiefs; whereupon the head chief **offered** as a prize his beautiful daughter to the one who could capture the bird, dead or alive, which apparently had come from another world.

Whereupon the warriors, with bows and arrows, went to the "tree of promise," and as each lucky one barely hit the bird, it would throw **off a** large quantity of the coveted coating, which, like the Lernean hydra's heads, multiplied by being **cropped**. At last, when the warriors were despairing of success, a little boy from a neighboring tribe, came to sat-

**isfy** his curiosity by seeing the wonderful bird **of** which he had heard; but, **as** his people were ever at war with this tribe, he **was** not permitted by the warriors to try his skill at archery, and **was** even threatened with death. But the head chief said, "He is a mere boy; let him shoot on equal terms with you who are brave and fearless warriors." His decision being final, the boy with unequalled skill brought the coveted bird to the ground.

Having received the daughter of the head chief in marriage, he divided the **oh-ko-àh** between his own and the tribe into which he had married, and peace was declared between them. Then the boy husband decreed that wampum should be the price of peace and blood, which decree was adopted by all nations. Hence arose the custom of **giving** belts of wampum to satisfy violated honor; hospitality, or any national privilege.

A boat filled with medicine men passed **near** a river bank, where a loud voice had proclaimed to all the inhabitants to remain indoors, but some disobeying died immediately. The next day, the boat being sought after, was found containing a strange being at each end, both creatures being fast asleep. A loud voice was then heard saying that destroying these creatures would result in a great blessing to the Indian. So they were decoyed into a neighboring council house, where they were put to death and burned, and from their ashes rose the tobacco plant, that inestimable boon not only to the Indian but to his pale-faced brother.

In the beginning the birds, having been created naked, remained hidden, being ashamed of their nakedness. But at last they assembled in a great council of all winged creatures, at which they petitioned the gods to give them some kind of covering. They were told that their coverings were all ready, but were a long way **off**, and they must either go or send for them. Accordingly another council was held to induce some bird to go in search of the plumage, but each one had some **excuse** for not going. At last a turkey-buzzard volunteered to go and bring the feathery uniforms. It being a long **journey** to the place whence he must bring them, he, who had been a clean bird heretofore, was obliged to eat carrion and filth of **all** kinds—hence his present nature. At length, directed by the gods, he found the coverings, and selfishly appropriated to **himself** the most beautifully colored one; but, finding he could not fly in this, he continued trying them on until he selected his present uniform, in which, although it is **the** least beautiful of any, he can **so** gracefully ride through

the air. The good turkey buzzard then returned bearing the feathery garments from which each bird chose his present colored suit.

Three sisters are supposed to preside over the favorite vegetables, corn, beans, and squashes. They have the forms of beautiful females, and are represented as loving each other dearly and dwelling in peace and happiness. The vines of the vegetables grow upon the same soil and cling lovingly around each other. She who is the spirit of corn is supposed to be draped with its long leaves and silken tassels. She who **guards** the bean has a crown of its velvety pods with garments woven of the delicate tendrils, while the spirit of squashes is clothed with the brilliant blossoms under her care, and in bright nights they can be seen flitting about, or heard rustling among the tall corn. At the yearly festivals held in their honor they are appealed to as "our life, our supporters."

These are but a few of the very many similar myths gathered among the Iroquois during the past season. To some they may seem as idle tales, but to those from whom I received them they were realities, for many of those forest children of "larger growth" still cling to their myths as the only link which binds them to a happier past. And shall the pale-face, who has not yet rid himself of the shackles of superstition in a thousand forms, and who sees daily his household gods torn down before him by Comparative Mythology and its allied sciences—shall he turn with contempt from these strivings of the infant human mind in its search after the unknowable?

The reply of Tecumseh to Gen. Harrison, during the treaty of Tippecanoe, was no figure of speech. The General presiding, requested the distinguished chief to take a seat. **Tecumseh** shook his head and refused. Harrison repeated his request, saying, "Your father commands you to sit there." That instant Tecumseh, stretching forth his hand, said, "(The Sun is **my** father, the Earth my mother; upon her bosom will I rest;" and he dropped upon the ground.

From the ground had the Indian been brought forth. **The** earth had ever sustained, and when his life was over she **re-**ceived him back again.

#### LAST WORDS AND DEPARTURE OF

**Ta-rhu<sup>n</sup>-hia-wâh-hu<sup>n</sup>**, (the **Hi-â-wâ-tha** of Longfellow.)

It has been with design that I have omitted giving in full that interesting myth of the Onondagas, the story of **Hi-â-wâh-**

**tha**, beautiful as it is even in its crudeness. But the gold has been extracted from the ore by America's most gifted poet, and with its beauties enhanced a thousand fold it is **not meet** that the unskilled should encroach within its boundaries to mar its perfection. But there could be no more fitting conclusion to these myths of the Iroquois than to give the farewell words of the legendary founder of that confederacy which ever rendered them invincible.

Before the great council which had adopted his advice dispersed, he arose and with a dignified air thus addressed them:

"**FRIENDS AND BROTHERS:**—I have now fulfilled my mission in this world. I have taught you arts which you will find useful. I have furnished you seed and grains for your gardens. I have removed obstructions from your waters, and made the forest habitable by teaching you to destroy its monsters. I have given you fishing and hunting grounds, I have instructed you in making and using implements of war. I have taught you how to cultivate corn. Lastly, I have taught you to form a confederacy of friendship and **union**. If you preserve this, and admit no foreign element of **power** by the admission of other nations, you will always be free, numerous and happy. If other tribes and nations **are** admitted to your councils, they will sow the seeds of **jealousy** and discord, and you will become few, feeble, and enslaved..

"Friends and brothers, remember these words. They are the last you will hear from the lips of **Hi-â-wâ-tha!** **FAREWELL!**"

As the voice of the wise man ceased, sweet sounds from the air burst on the ears of the multitude. The whole sky seemed to be filled with melody, and while all eyes were directed to catch glimpses of the sight and enjoy strains of the celestial music that filled the sky, **Hi-â-wâ-tha** was seen seated in his snow-white canoe in mid air, rising with every choral chant that burst forth. As he arose, the sounds became more soft and faint, till he vanished in the summer clouds and the melody ceased.

Thus departed **Hi-a-wa-tha**,  
**Hi-a-wa-thn**, the beloved,  
 In the glory of the sunset,  
 In the purple mists of evening;  
 To the regions of the **Home-Wind**,  
 Of the **North-west-Wind**, **Kee-way-din**,  
 To the Islands of the Blessed,  
 To the kingdom of **Po-ne-mah**,  
 To the Land of the **Hereafter**.