AMONG THE SIX NATIONS

By "Kanoerohnkwa" - Mrs. Celia B. File, M.A. '30

In the fall of 1921, I reluctantly made application to teach the Central Mohawk School on the Tyendinaga Reserve near Deseronto. Nothing but an overwhelming desire to teach, and the fact that "white" schools in the vicinity were closed to me because a temporary certificate, long-expired, could not be again renewed by the local inspector, caused me to seek what I then considered an inferior, even a degrading position. There was no difficulty about securing it, for qualified teachers were not as plentiful as they are to-day, and most of them evidently felt as I did about teaching Indians. I still hesitated, but after considerable urging on the part of the Indian agent, consented to look into the matter.

"Shall I be safe among such savage people? Is there a white family near the school with whom I can board?"

"They are not wild beasts, you know, and if you take my advice, you will board with any one of half a dozen Indian families", was the reply.

Board with Indians! It was unthinkable! Live in a wigwam or in a two-roomed wooden shanty with the dogs, the half-clad, dirty children, the lazy father, the slatternly mother, the smoke, the filth, the stench, the unpalatable food! Never! I would settle down once more to the hard farm life from which I was trying to escape because of ill health!

"Go and see for yourself", said the exasperated man. It was this or nothing, so I decided to go.

I had lived for years four miles east of Deseronto, but had never been on the Reserve, which begins at the western limits of the town. Occasionally, I had seen these strange people about the streets, dark-skinned, silent, stern-looking, and I felt the popular prejudice against them, felt my own superiority as an Anglo-Saxon. I had read stories of their treachery and cruelty, and believed that any white person who found himself alone with them would promptly lose his scalp. Many a time since that have my Indian friends laughed with me when I have told them what I am telling you now.

My disillusionment began the minute we entered the Reserve. Buildings better than the ones on our own farm met my eye, silos, herds of Holsteins or Jerseys, well-cultivated fields, good fences, lawns gay with flowers. Farther on we passed through a district where the soil was poorer and the farmers were less thrifty. The unpainted houses were smaller, the barns more or less dilapidated, the fields uncultivated, but even at that, it was much better than I had expected. Then we passed the new school of which the agent had spoken, the most modern rural school I had then seen. In addition to the large class-room, there were two cloak rooms and a teacher's room, something of which I had never heard until then. In the basement was the furnace, and two large rooms provided space for play during bad weather.

Presently we came to the Council House, a large building, unpainted, rapidly falling to ruin. "Typically Indian", I thought. Next to it was a half-completed building, and I learned later that it had been in this condition many years, owing to some dispute.

At last, we reached the Bay Shore Road, and followed it to the locality to which I had been directed. The houses were noticeably better here, the farmers more prosperous. We passed the stone church dedicated to the memory of Captain John or Odeserontyou, who had led his Loyalist Mohawk followers to this Reserve in 1784. I knew nothing of the history of these people at that time, but my interest in their proud story was quickened when I found myself teaching his descendants and those of Captain Joseph Brant, or Thayendanegea. An imposing house farther on, then in a very dilapidated state, I learned later was "The Pines", formerly the home of the late Dr. Oronhyatekha, supreme chief ranger of the Independent Order of Foresters and a protege of King Edward VII, who became interested in him when he visited Canada in 1860 when Prince of Wales. Because Dr. Oronhyatekha's only surviving child had married a white man, she was now regarded as a white woman, consequently could not own property on the Reserve, and "The Pines" had reverted to the "Band", or the Mohawks of that Reserve. It was then, and still is, rented by white people. Any available farms are eagerly sought by those of my own race. Not only is the land good, but there are no taxes to pay except a school tax. Indian land is not taxed.

Across the road from "The Pines", and a little farther on, was a large, white house which I came to know very well indeed. It is the home of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hill and their family. Mrs. Hill is a great-great-granddaughter of both Captain John and Captain Joseph Brant, and is legal custodian of that part of the famous Queen Anne communion service which remains in the possession of this section of the Mohawk nation. It is kept in a safe in her house and is used now only on special occasions - at Easter and Christmas, and on the Sunday nearest May 22nd, the anniversary of the landing of this devoted band of Loyalists on the shores of the Bay of Quinte in 1784. This was henceforth to be their home instead of the broad lands which they had lost in the Mohawk Valley, because they had remained loyal to the British cause.

The story of this silver is one of the most romantic in Canadian history. It was sent to the Mohawks by the good Queen in 1712 and was used by them in the chapel which she built for them at their request at Fort Hunter. At the beginning of the Revolution they were forced to flee, and for seven long years the silver lay where they had buried it, not daring to take it with them on their hazardous journey to Canada. Years later, four of the bravest of their warriors, led by Captain John, stole back, and in the dead of night, dug it up, their spade making on the flagon a dint which I have often traced with my finger. They reached their people at Lachine in safety, and during their journey to their new home on the Bay of Quinte, the silver, wrapped in a blanket, lay in the lap of Captain John's wife as she sat in her canoe. On landing, the first act of these people whom we are pleased to call savages, was one of loyalty to Britain and of faith in God. They cut a pole and erected it and ran up the British flag; then, upturning a canoe and covering it with their altar cloth, they placed on it their treasured silver. Grouping themselves about these symbols of their faith in God and the British King, they sang/hymn in their native tongue, and listened with heads reverently bowed as their layreader offered a prayer of thanksgiving. Not until this was finished did they turn to such problems as those of food and shelter. Surely there is no heart but must thrill at this beautiful story, no man or woman but must look with respect on the descendants of this noble band.

Now let us hurry on past Mrs. Hill's with the frightened teacher looking for a boarding-place where she will not be in danger of losing her scalp. A quarter of a mile farther on was the school house, an ugly, red box of a place with yard overgrown with weeds and never a tree or a flower garden to be seen. I had been warned that it was very old and very cold, but had been promised a new one inside a year should I accept the position. One look convinced me that I would not do so unless I were sure that promise was definite.

The large white house on the other side of the road and a stone's throw farther on, must be the one I was seeking. There were shade trees and bright flowers and the curtains at the windows were crisp and white. The tall, snowy-haired lady with the regal bearing who rose from her rocking chair on the verandah at my approach, must be Mrs. Stephen Maracle "Aunt Mary". One look into her wise, kind eyes and I had made my decision. I would teach the Central Mohawk School if I could live in her house.

I made my request but, much to my chagrin, met with refusal, courteous but none the less firm. Stephen Maracle had decided that she had too much work to do and must not board the new teacher. She was no longer young and had only her sixteen-year old niece to help her. There were thirty-four cows to be milked and part of the cream must be made into butter for the customers in Belleville who had eaten no other for years. Just now there were eleven hired men to be fed besides her own immediate family. They worked about seven hundred acres of land and had seventeen work horses at that time. Perhaps Mrs. Long Bill would take me. They had not as much work and Dora was at home to help. It was on a side road a bit farther up and toward the bay. Needless to say, I was rapidly changing my opinion of Indians, and my inherited prejudices were vanishing like mist before the morning sun.

Much down-hearted, I made my way to Mrs. Long Bill (Mrs. William Maracle) but realized that I could never walk that distance and that the road would often be blocked in winter. It was a beautiful old home with a verandah overgrown with grape vines and a wonderful view of the bay. "Aunt Lu", as I came to call her, was as attractive as Aunt Mary. Yes, she could take me to board, but she agreed that there would be difficulty in getting to school at times. Perhaps, if I could convince Steve, who was her brother, that I would not make much work, I could persuade him to let Mary take me until I could find another boarding place.

Returning to Steve's, we found him just gathering up the milk pails. Perhaps, it was my desperation, perhaps the fact that, as a farmer's wife, I would understand conditions and not demand unreasonable attention, perhaps, too, it was a beginning of that admiration for each other which has made us such firm friends from that day to this - for some reason or other I managed to obtain his reluctant consent to come for a few weeks until I could find a suitable place.

I confess, frankly, that I took full advantage of that concession. It was the thin edge of the wedge, and for six years I remained in this home, six of the happiest years of my life. And it was, and is a real home to me in every sense of the word. Whenever I am tired or am recovering from an illness, I long for my cheerful room there with its comfortable bed and its three windows, one of them over-looking the bay, and its door opening out on the balcony. In a year or so the verandah became a sun-room and the balcony a sleeping-porch. But above all, I long for the relaxation and the sense of peace which come to me there. The world moves on but there there is no hurry, no mad rush for material things. Time means so little - what is not done to-day can be done to-morrow. I long for the low, musical voices

and the unhurried speech and the silence; for Indians do not think it necessary to talk all the time. I long for "my" people, for the sincerity of their welcome, their courtesy, and their dignity, their kindliness and their generosity, generosity not only in the things of this world but in the way they regard their fellow-men. There is an absence of curiosity. You are accepted as you are, cautiously at first, but with increasing warmth as they learn to trust you. You are never questioned, but if you choose to give your confidence it is received with a sympathetic understanding and never in the slightest degree is that confidence betrayed. The Indian expects the same consideration from you, and if he gets it he is your friend for life. One thing only he will never forgive and that is being held up to ridicule. Since I have never been guilty of this even in my own mind, I believe that I can boast of having for a friend every Indian who knows me. Word travels fast among them, and when you have broken down the reserve and the suspicion of a few and have shown them that they have indeed your sympathy and your love, the word is passed on to the others and you are accepted by all.

How did I manage it? There are teachers on Indian Reserves to-day who have been there much more than six years but are still rank outsiders. They are tolerated, treated with courtesy, but are not accepted and trusted. It is because they have held themselves aloof, have never tried to understand the people among whom they live, have deliberately hugged to their breasts the old, unkind prejudices, the old idea of the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon. When anything occurs which would not be liable to happen in a well-ordered Anglo-Saxon community, they do not attempt to veil their contempt and disapproval, do not try to look at it through the eyes of the Indians themselves, nor consider the differences in race and in history.

It is not necessary to "go native" though I do admit that my years among them have left their stamp on me. I learned the lessons of patience and forbearance, of greater charity toward others. I learned to be generous. The Indian shares what he has with those less fortunate, even though misfortune may have been self-caused. I revised my ideas of hospitality. Never do you enter an Indian home without being offered food. If there is plenty, you have a feast; if there is only bread and butter and tea, you are given these, and no apology is made - and it is always good bread and good butter. I do not know of a woman on the Tyendinaga Reserve who is not a good cook. I learned that a two or a three-roomed house can be just as clean, and can be just as much a happy home as though it were three times the size. Happiness, I found, is only relative. It does not depend on dollars and cents and what they will bring. The depression has since forced home that lesson on the whole world, but I learned it from my Indians from example.

"But what of the shiftlessness, the uncleanliness, the cruelty, the immorality, the treachery of the Indians?" you ask. "Did you find none of these?" Indeed I did, but, strange to say, not appreciably more than I find them among my own race. Remember that I am speaking of Indians who are in an advanced state of civilization. To all intents and purposes, their lives are the same, outwardly, as those of their white neighbours. There are good housekeepers and bad housekeepers everywhere, just as there are men who are good managers and good workers, and those who are the reverse.

I must admit that they are perhaps more callous toward suffering than the white race. This is more noticeable in their attitude toward the sick, but is partly due to the patient endurance of pain which no white man could stand. I know of one beautiful Indian girl, Miss Ina Hill, who kept her suffering to herself until it was too late. She concealed her pain as far as she could, hoping to go to the School Fair, and died just after being wheeled from the operating room. Her appendix had

ruptured before she left for the hospital. There is great need of a resident doctor and nurse on the Tyendinaga Reserve.

As for laxity in keeping the marriage vow, I often think of the words of the late Canon Creegan, missionary on this Reserve for twenty-three years: "The Indians are not immoral but unmoral." We must remember that the marriage customs of the Indians and of the white race were not at all the same when the two first came into contact with each other. The Indians were accustomed to what we would call trial marriages, and if husband and wife were not compatible they would separate as a matter of course, the children going with the mother. A second marriage was usually permanent, though not necessarily so. Traces of this custom are still found, and although the custom is frowned upon, the stigma is not so great as in other communities and does not extend to the children of the irregular unions. Illegitimacy is perhaps slightly higher than among us, but the Indian is kinder of heart - the sins of the father are not visited upon his innocent child. Indian fathers and mothers love their children and are kind to them and proud of them, and are just as ambitious for them as white parents are for theirs. Children born out of wedlock on the Reserve are given the same advantages as those that have a more fortunate birth.

I do not know that the Indian is a bit more treacherous than his white brother, and if he were, could we blame him? We may well hang our heads in shame as we look back at our treatment of him. Can we censure him for meeting treachery with treachery, and cruelty with cruelty? Remember, he was fighting with his back to the wall for his home and his lands. In all justice to him, we must credit him with meeting fair treatment with treatment that was equally fair. Sir William Johnson was more successful than any other white man before or since in dealing with the "treacherous" Iroquois, and the principle which he followed was simply one of honesty in all his transactions with them. They are equally responsive to-day. You will receive from them the same treatment that you give, though it has been my experience that the Indian is more willing to overlook slight injuries than those of my own race. Once deceive an Indian intentionally, however, and you can never again expect him to trust you.

In two respects the Indian is noticeably inferior to the white man - in ability to organize and in the development of the acquisitive instinct. Both of these defects, as we consider them, can be explained when we realize that neither quality was particularly necessary to him in his native state. The Six Nations Confederacy was a well-developed political organization, it is true, but in his daily life the Indian did not need to do much planning nor much saving and he has not yet caught up to the white race in this respect. This is one reason white men find it so easy to cheat the Indians - and they are still doing so. The Council will sign away its rights to the natural gas on its Reserve, for example, and wake up to the realization of what it has done only when the company uses the gas to supply a whole city. There is not enough planning in community affairs; consequently, there is much confusion at the last minute. Nobody thinks of the lamps, perhaps, until it begins to get dark, nor of the Guild silverware until it is time to set the table. Everyone is good-natured about it, however, and just sits down and waits till someone drives a mile for lamps or coal oil, or twice as far for the teaspoons.

In the olden days there was no incentive to hoard, and so this instinct is almost lacking. There were no banks; for there was no money except wampum, which was used for tribal, but not for private transactions. What was there to save? Each man supplied his own wants - his canoe, weapons, snowshoes, dwelling, clothing and food. The Iroquois was an agriculturalist, it is true, and in the fall he - or rather his wife - stored up food enough to do the family until spring - rice, beans

dried corn, dried pumpkin, dried berries - but he did not need to have more than one year's supply on hand at a time. He lived close to nature and she supplied his wants. It is only since he has come in contact with the white race that he has felt the need to hoard, and that is only a little over three centuries ago, a mere instant in the development of a people. Racial instincts die hard and are just as slow to develop. Let us remember this when we are prone to censure the Indian for buying a car or a piano or for putting an addition to his house instead of taking out insurance or putting his money in the bank. There are exceptions, of course, and Uncle Steve is one of these, as you may have surmised. He is a shrewd business man, but he owes no small part of his success to Aunt Mary, who is as thrifty as any white woman I know.

I saw many changes on the Reserve during those six years. Young people married and I became godmother to their children. One of Aunt Mary's boys married and, since the celebration is always held at the groom's home, I helped prepare the feast for the two hundred guests, a feast which lasted three days for some of those from a distance; for we became snowbound. The old Council House and the unfinished building next to it were torn down and the material used for a splendid new Council House, the basement fitted up by the Ladies' Guild as a kitchen and dining-room. The Council House is used also as a community hall, and many a dance and concert are held there during the year. We shivered over the stove of the old school that winter, but at Easter moved into the new one, a modern building with all the up-to-date equipment that delights the heart of a teacher. One by one the original pupils passed the entrance and left me, many of them to go to High School in Deseronto, until at the end of the time, only two were left, and they were in the Entrance class. I do not believe many schools have a better record than that - yet I am repeatedly asked if Indians can learn!

The school was a never-ending source of pride and joy and satisfaction. Problems of discipline just didn't exist within the school-room; for Indian children are quieter than white children, and are more courteous and more respectful to those who are older than they. There was the usual amount of quarrelling over games out of doors, but I believe in self-government, and they soon learned to settle minor disputes themselves. I could trust them to keep their word. At one time, there was serious illness in the home where I stayed, and as I happen to know a little bit about nursing, it was sometimes necessary for me to go home a few moments during school hours to look after my patient. I would assign work for each class, and then would say: "I must leave you for a little while, but only if you will promise me to work just as though I were here. If you do anything out of the ordinary, I trust you to tell me <u>yourself</u> when I return." Every hand would go up, and I have reason to believe the promise was kept. They were proud to know I would trust them. I have since tried the same scheme with Upper School pupils when I must go to the office but it doesn't always work. All too frequently pandemonium reigns before I am out of hearing!

It was an unconventional school in more ways than one, especially in the teaching of handicrafts. Indians are very deft, and quickly learn sewing, knitting, mending, darning, embroidery, etc. The boys took as many prizes for buttonholes at the School Fair as the girls did. Later, when our dream came true and we secured an outfit and prepared hot lunches, they learned cooking and how to serve a meal properly and how to clean up afterwards. The work was divided and every pupil served on each committee in turn. They had a practical proof of the value of sterilizing the dishes. One boy went home ill after lunch with what proved in a day or two to be diphtheria. None of the other pupils contracted it. Each pupil had his own drinking cup or made one from paper as I had taught him. A first-aid kit enabled

me to teach them how to care for a wound to prevent infection; for I let them look after each other's cuts and bruises, under my direction. The smaller children were put to sleep on the cloak room benches for a while, in the afternoon. Some of them walked miles to school. The inspector caught me with the tiniest one asleep on my lap one day, the classes tiptoeing to my desk and reciting almost in whispers for fear of awakening him. We bought a phonograph which was a perpetual delight for marching, folk-dancing, writing, singing, and the appreciation of music, and we paid for it with the proceeds from sales at our annual school picnic, and from Christmas concerts. They were glorious concerts, for Indian children are clever at that sort of thing, and our tree was resplendent with gifts and decorations, most of them made in the school room.

It was a wonderful school and I had a wonderful time. There is every opportunity in an Indian school for a teacher to develop her initiative; for the Department of Indian Affairs supplies any material within reason that she requisitions, and encourages the teaching of anything that will make the pupils better citizens. The boys and girls were responsible and appreciative, and I believe they were as unhappy as I when the time came for me to leave.

When I had been on the Reserve about three years, I became an extramural student at Queen's and eventually left to study intramurally. I had long cherished a secret wish to be thought worthy to be given an Indian name, which is the highest honour these people can give, and great was my delight when I found my wish was to come true. My pride knew no bounds when I was called Kanoerohnkwa, which means "love" or "loving-hearted". "We wanted to call you 'Good Mother'," they said, "but it is so long a word that we were afraid no white person could say it, and we want you to use your name", and I do whenever I have the opportunity. It was a sad day indeed when I said good-bye to my school and my friends. I felt that I was turning my back on a duty, that I was more useful there than anywhere else in the world. I have never lost that feeling. Unfortunately, the salary was comparatively small and my acquisitive instinct is more highly developed than that of the average Indian. Moreover, the love of study had got the upper hand of me after years of repression, and would not be denied.

At the end of a year I found myself with an honour degree in English and History and, much to my surprise, holding the Sir James Aikens Fellowship in Colonial History. This meant my M.A., of course, and when it became necessary for me to decide on a topic for my thesis, it was a foregone conclusion that it should be something dealing with my people. I had already worked one summer at the Public Archives in Ottawa, and had revelled in all its treasures. Molly Brant kept thrusting herself into the limelight and at last Professor McArthur gave me permission to write her story. The thesis was accepted, but I cannot say it was completed, for the woman will not let me alone and I am still unearthing fascinating things about her.

My interest in Indians has never abated and the summer of 1932 found me on the Grand River among the Six Nations, partly following the trail of the fascinating Miss Molly and her descendants, partly trying to get acquainted with the so-called pagans of that Reserve. Miss Molly proved as elusive as the "pagans" were friendly. This was the first time I had come in contact with Indians who kept the faith of their forefathers. Outwardly the Mohawks at Tyendinaga are Indians in name only. They live as people do in any other farming community, are members of the Church of England, and have little or no knowledge of their old traditions and legends and of the Iroquois ritual. On the Six Nations Reserve I found four thousand people, one-fifth of whom still cling to the old Iroquois religious beliefs and follow the form of worship laid down by their prophet, Handsome Lake.

On two different occasions I visited their Longhouses, which correspond to our churches. The first visit was to that of the Senecas, and was uneventful. I was accompanied by two young Mohawk friends, neither of whom understood Seneca or had ever before been in a Longhouse. The ceremonies were as strange to them as to me. Naturally, I was looked upon with some suspicion, for white people are prone to ridicule these ceremonial dances. The strained atmosphere gradually disappeared, however, as they saw my decorous behaviour. I was intensely interested in all I saw and heard - the long, bare, room with benches ranged along the walls; the two benches in the centre where the musicians were seated; the musicians themselves with their Indian drum and their rattles made from cows' horns; the dances, which were begun by the older men; others, men, women and children, joining in one by one until a long procession wound about the room. The steps varied - sometimes they were little more than a shuffle - but though each dance began slowly and quietly, it increased in speed and excitment as the line increased in length. Even the oldest of the women danced with grace, like flowers in a summer breeze, but the men, especially the youths, danced with great abandon, sometimes leaping into the air, throwing their bodies about, and punctuating their song with true Indian whoops. Always there was rhythm - the weird songs of the men, the beat of the rattles and the throbbing of the drum, the pounding of the dancers' feet, feet clad in every form of footwear from moccasins and long rubber boots to dainty high-heeled pumps. The dress was practically the same as in any other country gathering, though many of the men were just as they had come from the field and several of the older women wore shawls and the full, gathered skirts beloved of our grandmothers. At the close of each dance, everyone sat down and there was a silence, then one of the older men would rise and speak in Seneca, and soon after he took his seat, the musicians would again take their places and one, or sometimes two, of the older men would begin a new dance.

My Mohawk friends grew tired of it long before I did; for I was far from satisfied. What were the speakers saying? What were the words of the songs? What was the significance of each dance? My friends could not tell me but said that Bernice Loft could explain it all. Accordingly, a week later I visited the Cayuga Longhouse, with Miss Loft as my interpreter and teacher, and had one of the most interesting evenings of my life.

My reception was far different here, thanks to Miss Loft, whose Indian name is "Dawendine", meaning "The Dawn". Her home is very near three of the Longhouses, and her father, Mr. William Loft, known to his own people as "Dewaserageh" or "Two Axe", is one of the hereditary chiefs, a Sachem or Royaner. Men of all the tribes have visited their home as long as she can remember, to talk over political matters with her father. In this way she has learned all the languages and she and her father have the distinction of being the only persons living who speak English and, with equal fluency, the languages of all six of the nations that make up the Confederacy. She is highly cultured, and unlike most of the Christian Indians, is deeply interested in the lore of her own people - their legends and traditions, and the Iroquois ritual. Some day Canadian historians will appreciate the effort she is making to preserve these.

As we entered the Longhouse, Dawendine spoke to a dear little old lady, one of the head women, telling her of my interest in the Indians, and this word was passed on to the head men, known as "Keepers of the Faith". Presently, one of them Jake Hess, came to me to be introduced and to bid me welcome. I wish I had time to tell you more about him, his dignity and courtliness, and the thousand kindnesses he has shown me. He is the typical Indian in appearance. Others followed him, and soon I found myself very much at home. One of the head men, in his own language, arose between dances, and urged those present to enter into the dances with enthusiasm.

Not only would they please the Great Spirit by showing their happiness, but they must show every courtesy to their guest who had come so far because of her interest in Indians. Later on, I was asked to say a few words, or at least to stand and be introduced to all. I was delighted to have an opportunity to thank them for their kindness, and to tell of the intense interest I had felt in all I had seen and heard that evening, but I did not realize until afterwards what a signal honour they had paid me. Dawendine told me as we were going home that for fifteen years she had been taking people to the Longhouse, some of them distinguished men and women, world-famous authorities on Indian lore. I was only the third of these whom they had asked to speak and - mirabile dictu! - the first woman whom she had ever heard speak in the Longhouse. I was deeply moved and asked her why they did it.

"It was partly because I vouched for you, I suppose, though I have done the same for others, but" - imagine my astonishment - "it was mostly because they liked your face as soon as you came in."

I believe, however, that they intuitively felt my sympathy, my keen desire to see all this through their eyes, to be, for the time being, an Indian. However, I happen to be blessed with dark hair and eyes, and many an Indian girl has skin lighter than mine, as I have often laughingly pointed out as I placed my hand beside hers. This has been a help to me, I know, and I have been asked, not once but many times, and not only by Indians but by white people who marvel at my sympathy with them, if I have not Indian blood in my veins. Once I would have been horrified at the idea, but now, especially if it is an Indian who asks, I am sorry I cannot answer in the affirmative; for I know it is the highest compliment he can pay me. The Indian has intense racial pride in spite of all we have done to crush him. "Certainly I am proud to be an Indian", one beautiful girl said to me. "The white man has robbed us of our lands, has deprived us of our power, has degraded us with his civilization, but he cannot take away our Indian blood. If we lose our pride in this, what have we left?"

Before I left the Cayuga Longhouse, I spoke of having been given an Indian name by the Mohawks at Tyendinaga, and expressed a wish to have it confirmed in true Indian fashion in the Longhouse, according to the old tribal rites and ceremonies. I was told that there were only two days in the year when this was possible, and was invited to return on the naming day in the Green Corn Festival. I could not do so, however, as it was in September, just a few days after the opening of school. The invitation was again extended the following February, when they celebrate the New Year Festival, the longest and most important thanksgiving festival of the year, and I obtained leave of absence and spent three happy days among them. When I arrived Thursday night, I found a difficulty had arisen. The year before certain reporters had attended the Festival and had ridiculed the ceremonies in their papers. The head men and women of the Longhouse had determined to prevent a recurrence of this, and had passed a resolution that no white person should ever again be admitted. Then someone had suddenly remembered their invitation to me, and the question arose whether they could break their rule without loss of dignity. There was much earnest councilling, but finally it was decided that the Indian must never fail in courtesy, and so, to make a long story short, I received the coveted distinction.

The dances which preceded the naming ceremony were as colourful a spectacle as I have ever seen. Many of the people had been there since dawn, when Jake Hess had burned the sacred tobacco whose smoke, ascending to the Great Spirit, bore their thanksgiving for the blessings of the year, and their repentance for its sins. We passed many others tramping stolidly through the snow, and arrived at ten o'clock to find about a hundred silent men and women already ranged along the walls, the sexes separate. Children of all ages were seated by their parents; for each clan has its place in the Longhouse.

Presently, the east door opened and the dancers entered, thirty-two men and fourteen women dressed in the treasured costumes which are becoming all too few on the Reserves. Each year more of them find their way into museums. The faces of the men were painted, and as I looked at these and at the bizarre costumes, the buckskin and beadwork, the fringe and feathers, the brooches and bracelets - as I listened to the soft pad, pad of the moccasined feet, the rhythm of the tomtom, the staccato of the rattles, the measured chant and the wild whoops - as I watched the animation of these men and women worshipping the Great Spirit in the intricate Feather Dance - I felt that I was at last among Indians. These were no emasculated creatures, hopelessly outdistanced in the economic race, afraid to express their personality for fear of the white men's ridicule! For the moment the clock was turned back for centuries, and they were lords of the forests and streams, Nature's children, drawing sustenance from her breast. They were here to-day to show their gratitude to the Great Spirit, to make him happy by being happy themselves.

Twice or three times they encircled the room, and then the spell was broken as one after another men and women and children in the dress of to-day stole from their places and joined the procession. The men and boys were ahead, according to age, and then the women and girls. Presently, when the benches were almost empty, Dawendine took my hand and we danced with the rest.

After the dancers were again seated, the men one by one stepped to the centre of the room and spoke of the blessings of the past year and of their gratitude to the Great Spirit for permitting them to bear testimony to him publicly once more. Their speeches were punctuated by the guttural exclamations of the other men - for all the world like the fervid "Amen's" heard in a camp-meeting! No two of these speeches were alike, yet each was one from the ritual for this particular day and each was letter perfect, I was afterwards told. Even the tiny three-year-old, grandson of one of the head men stepped out shyly and lisped his few words correctly, much to the pride of his parents and grandparents.

Another dance followed; then the naming ceremony, which was very simple. When my turn came, my good friend Jacob Hess, standing near me, made a speech - with his usual eloquence, Dawendine told me - describing my work among his people and my warm feeling for them. Then he turned to me, and with a bow which might have been learned at the king's court, motioned me to stand and advance a few steps. Taking my hand, he welcomed me into the tribe, which would henceforth know me as Kanoekwa, the Cayuga translation of my Mohawk name, Kanoerohnkwa. The Mohawks have no Longhouse. I resumed my seat, but almost immediately was on my feet again as one after another these really warm-hearted people came up and shook my hand and spoke a few kindly words. I may not have understood the words, but the smile and the handclasp which accompanied them needed no interpretation.

Other dances followed and then a feast. Each family had contributed to this and the Mothers of the Longhouse, as the head women are called, had been moving about between dances preparing it. As far as possible, native foods are used. Bread of all kinds was placed together in huge baskets, hot, boiled corn bread, the small round cakes peculiar to this feast, and slices of brown or of white bread, all in the same receptacle. Two men entered with a huge cauldron of corn soup slung on a pole which they bore on their shoulders. Others carried large wooden trays heaped high with chunks of beef. Once it would have been venison. All night men had been watching this food as it cooked over an open fire. We had forgotten to bring pails to take home our share of the soup, but we received literally from the hands of the appointed men, our portion of the bread and meat - and ate it, too, for this was part of the ceremony. Every bid of food received must be eaten either there or at home to ensure good luck during the year. The men bearing the food did not help themselves, but accepted what was handed to them by one of the others.

Not until later as Dawendine, her father, Jake Hess, and I sat about the blazing fire in her home, did I realize the full significance of what had happened. I was now a full-fledged member of the Six Nations, they told me, with the same rights as they, social, religious and political. They have no secrets from me if I choose to learn them. I began right away - and I am afraid they will always look upon me as a human question mark! Both men are very old, one the tribal authority in religious matters, the other in the workings of the Confederacy. From the one I learned, for example, that it takes three full days to repeat the Iroquois doxology, and from the other, much about the clan system and the duties of the chiefs. I am of the Wolf Clan. We talked most of the night and, although I learned so pitifully little of what will soon be lost to the world - for much of what they know has never been put into black and white - yet it was brought home to me that I had never before done justice in my own mind to the fine qualities of this race - their kindness and patience, their courtesy and dignity, and their really high intelligence.

And that is how I became a member of the Six Nations, and proud indeed am I of the honour. It is seldom now that it is given to a white person in this way, especially to a woman, and, if the resolution passed recently is kept, and I believe it will be, I shall be the last. With all due respect to my Alma Mater, I still say that I value the distinction given me by the Six Nations as highly as I do the degree conferred on me at Queen's University. Money has no power to purchase either.

This story has been written partly from my bed in a hospital, partly in rest homes where I am recovering from the last of the operations that have dogged my path. When those blessed tyrants known as doctors permit me to leave the city, I am going to the most restful spot I know on earth, to my own room at Aunt Mary's. There in the peaceful atmosphere of that home, among the people who sympathize instinctively with your every mood, I hope to regain once more a sound mind in a sound body.

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July 25, 1972 - Mrs. Rile told A.B. Smith the original of the foregoing was prepared 1934.