

"Attention - Mr. Harding" may
be by John S. Phillips, for the
comments in pencil seem to be
in his handwriting. "The
Reader's Guide" does not list
this title under his name.

Stanley Swantley's note

"ATTENTION - MR. HARDING"

*about 1770 a small tribe
I mentioned & fact that
was mis to my confusion
350 yrs*

It occurred to me that news is news, no matter how old it may be, so long as it comes freshly to the mind that it enters. I came across a piece of news today that is about three hundred and fifty years old. But it was not old, we will say to the grandfather of King Philip of Massachusetts, Chief C . This probably about the way it came to him in the year 1575. If it were today, he would have asked for the evening paper. At that time, in the assembly of his associate chiefs and their counsel, lodge, he probably inquired as to what the couriers had brought in that was of interest. Then there was disclosed to him that there were extraordinary happenings in the heart of what is now New York State, about five hundred miles away. This information had been passed from tribe to tribe, and a runner had spread it to the shores of Buzzards Bay the news that a League of Nations had been formed; that its purpose was to end warfare, to bring justice, happy life and conduct of the members of those tribes that joined this League; that the idea of it had already spread from the shores of Lake Erie to the Hudson; that already they were banded together for this noble purpose, several tribes of which the Iroquois was the head, and including those whose language was similar.

I don't think that this Indian Chief to whom this message was brought was any more interested than I was in looking into this extraordinary plan that was carried out by several great men of that time, and one great woman, put into actual practice and became a dominating factor in Indian life for two hundred years. If we have wisdom, we believe, not only in the doctrine of universal *aspiration*, but in the doctrine of universal aspiration, and in studying about men and women in all periods and places as well as *ed* civilization, we are surprised to find evidences of similar understanding and you may say similar idealism. It should make us feel very humble. There are certain facts *about the League* that have come down to us ~~not through~~ written records of the time, but through what you might call more permanent records of transmitted and remembered facts. In the case of the Indians, and indeed of almost all peoples before the invention of printing, or where written language was unknown or very inadequate, there was *accuracy* accuracy of memory, an attitude of righteousness toward the exactness of memory that we can hardly understand now. Whole long histories with testimony and documents were passed along through the spoken word.

An old friend of mine, Dr. Charles Eastman, a full-blooded Sioux told me about his gathering of materials for the history of his tribe and how clearly the facts, episodes, histories of persons were recorded in the minds of old men and women. It is so of the facts about the Iroquois League of Nations, of the five nations, subsequently six nations. It was started by a Chief to whom afterward were attached legends of miraculous birth and wonderful youth and all that. I mention this to show how great a man he was regarded in his own people, and of what supreme importance they considered his achievement. This man's name, which is almost impossible for us to pronounce or even to spell, was Deganawida.

There were others associated with him,-- evidently men of unusual brains and unusual understanding, as well as great practical diplomatic ability. They had to persuade people of other tribes. They had to have the scheme so right, and so appealing to the human mind and human heart, that it would seem natural and acceptable. It is interesting that they were assisted in this by one great woman. There is no use in putting down her name, because its transliteration in English conveys nothing. But her name remains just the same. How far these people had gone will be shown by that fact. The women played a real part in their life, family and tribal, as mothers and educators of men, and for their practical wisdom and counsel.

The League was formed more out of a desire to stop the shedding of blood by violence, to secure peace between the tribes and to safeguard the human life and welfare. Its purposes and expression of profound sense and idealism. It was intended to secure "peace between individuals and between organized bodies and groups of persons" to secure sanity of mind and health of body." These two purposes were grouped in one expression. The Iroquois had one wonderful word or phrase into which was condensed these two ideas and aims. In addition to this, there were two more purposes,--"to spread righteousness in conduct, and in thought and speech," and to further "justice in the adjustment of rights and obligations."

I have used Mr. Hewitt's definition of the two Iroquois phrases that embody these four purposes. Then there was another one, a sort of a summing up of the whole thing, which he translates as ^{meaning "the"} "great commonwealth, the great ^{Law of Equity and} and righteousness and well-being". As this great scholar says, "This indeed was a notable effusion for the stone age of America."

Of course, these Indians were only human. They did not establish at once a Eutopia upon earth. It was not established without conflict and discussion.

It took a great many years to bring into effective operation and get into practical form this undertaking. Its opponents found a great leader in the Chief of the Onondagas. But even the opposition of that tribe was finally overcome, and the League became to a considerable degree a reality of life on this continent. It diminished war. It reduced violent crimes. It improved the administration of justice. It cemented friendships. It practically extended the idea of the brotherhood of man, and in a remote way proved its possibilities.

It is almost startling to imagine what the white man might have found here if the discovery of this continent had been postponed two hundred years. The influence of this league, not in all its idealistic applications, to be sure, spread from the Hudson to the Mississippi, and from the Lakes south beyond the Mason and Dixon line. The Iroquois and their associates were able folk. They improved the cultivation of the soil. They were ingenious and advanced in the construction of log buildings and forts. All this contributed to the development of mind. And from that strain came Brant, who was almost as good a general in some ways, as the British ever had in the Revolutionary War. The Indian could not stand up against the white man, and in that struggle, when his ability was twisted and turned away from what was best in him to the necessary resources of violent ^{defense} advances or attack. He had to fight for his existence. While the League of the Iroquois has to this day a sort of continued life, it was gone inevitably in that first century. In the conflicts between the white man, French and British, and finally what was almost a Civil war between the whites in the Revolution, they found it necessary to give the tribes the right to attack. Each side, if they wished, could remain neutral as a League. Out of this came disaster, and the final failure of the dream, giving way before the more powerful forces of our energetic, and you might almost say material strivings. And so the world goes through its phases. It is going through one now. Perhaps sometime the visiting ^{Martin} may contemplate this phase of the world as we are contemplating that, and look with wonder upon the conception, and with sadness upon the issue.