

ETHNOLOGY

What Hiawatha Was Made Of

Longfellow Created Hiawatha From Two Other Heroes And an Indian God, While Real Hiawatha Lay Forgotten

By EMILY C. DAVIS

HIAWATHA had a past Longfellow never knew about.

Movie stars, it seems, are not the only ones to lose their own pasts and become new personalities in the hands of a miracle-working press agent.

Longfellow made a new man of Hiawatha. He did it unconsciously, never dreaming that the Hiawatha he was immortalizing was a vastly different hero from the flesh and blood Hiawatha. But as a result of Longfellow's poetry, the literary—artificial—Hiawatha is the most famous Indian in America. The Hiawatha of history became a submerged personality.

Scientific research has brought the historic Hiawatha to light, and straightened out the mystery of what Longfellow's Hiawatha is "made of."

The real Hiawatha is disclosed as a cannibal. We may as well face that shuddery fact first. He reformed, it should be added hastily in fairness to him. And he had provocation, plenty of it, for doing something mad and desperate.

Cannibalism as Sublimation

Cannibalism happened to be an Indian way of taking it out on somebody else when you couldn't strike back at your real enemy. Nowadays, a man who couldn't strike back directly might try to get even with the world by bullying his office force, or, he might turn into an unscrupulous sharper in business.

The real Hiawatha lived about 1550 A.D. He had a genius for political planning. He lined up with an even greater Indian genius, and the result of that team was something new in government for Indian tribes. From their revolutionary scheme of Indian government, Jefferson seems to have got his inspiration for our United States of America. Without Hiawatha there might have been no United States as we know them.

All this being the case, Longfellow's "Song of Hiawatha" is a curious memorial to a great man.

If the real Hiawatha that Longfellow

never knew could stride back from the happy hunting ground where he has been hunting all these four centuries, and if he found his way to a modern public school, he would be a puzzled redskin. He would hear seven-year-olds piping lustily in his honor:

"Smiling answered Hiawatha:
'In the land of the Dacotahs
Lives the Arrow-Maker's daughter,
Minnehaha, Laughing Water.'"

A Disillusioned Ghost

For half an hour, the distinguished unseen guest would listen to rippling lines about Hiawatha's bride Minnehaha, Hiawatha's ingenuity in concocting a birchbark canoe, Hiawatha's success in bringing the gift of corn from the gods to the Indian. And after that, we can imagine the shade of Hiawatha stumbling forth, and murmuring sadly to himself (doubtless, by this time, in Longfellowian meter):

"And I thought my deeds remembered.

Such is fame—O Hiawatha!"

As a matter of prosaic fact, Hiawatha's ghost has not been reported haunting schoolrooms. But the revival of Hiawatha's career and character is as impressive as the return of his ghost would be.

The real Hiawatha has one man in particular to thank for his rescue from oblivion. That man is J. N. B. Hewitt, an ethnologist who specializes in digging out the facts about the Iroquois tribes.

Up in his tower-office in the old Smithsonian Building in Washington, Mr. Hewitt has a stack of big envelopes containing the history of Hiawatha and his people. It is a long story—187 pages of manuscript. Mr. Hewitt took it down, translating as he went, from the dictation of a blind Iroquois Indian. Not once in the long recital, continued from day to day, did that blind Indian hesitate over his facts. He had learned tribal history so well long ago that he could still repeat the lessons.

This Indian had been taught in the old-fashioned way by the elders of the

tribe. In the Indian way of education, lessons had to be taught orally and fixed in the memories of the young, and so passed on from generation to generation. There were no lesson books or writings among tribes north of Mexico.

All that ancient history of early American heroes, wars, migrations, and diplomacies is lost now, except what science can rescue here and there. The rising generation of young Indians knows almost nothing about such matters, so the salvaging of Indian history is not going to be possible much longer.

Hiawatha, Mr. Hewitt learned, had a rascal brother who was a powerful chief. The brother hated Hiawatha and determined to crush him. One by one, Hiawatha's wife and children were killed, poisoned probably, in the long, determined family feud. All this time Hiawatha dared not fight back. His brother had the arrogant and feared strength of a gangster chief. Added to everything else the brother had the reputation of being a wizard. Even the powers of darkness seemed to be with him.

In baffled rage against his brother, Hiawatha turned cannibal. Mr. Hewitt comments on this by saying:

Things Longfellow Never Knew

Hiawatha was a real Indian. He lived in the sixteenth century.

The Hiawatha of history was a cannibal—but he reformed.

The Hiawatha of history deserves a place in a national hall of fame. He and another Indian genius established an Indian league of nations. From that political invention of the Indians, it is believed, Thomas Jefferson got the idea for a United States.

Hiawatha had two wives, but neither of them was named Minnehaha.

Longfellow shouldn't have gone to Schoolcraft's writings for his Indian history. Schoolcraft was muddled in some of his information.

"I doubt whether within the historic period of Iroquoian life cannibalism was a tribal custom. The whole structure of Iroquois government was exerted to prevent bloodshed. It seems rather that Hiawatha reverted to primitive ancestral ways. He would slay whatever unfortunate stranger crossed his path. And not only slay, but eat."

Hiawatha's sick madness of cannibal excesses made him an outcast. One day in the forest he had killed a man and was boiling water in the pot in his hut when he was startled by a vision. In the boiling water he saw a face looking up at him. The face was that of another Indian, Dekanawida, who had climbed on the roof of Hiawatha's lodge and was looking down the smoke hole.

To the unhappy Hiawatha this sudden appearance of the face was a mystic vision so impressive that he foreswore cannibalism then and there. Ready to see the world in a new light, he walked out into the forest. There Dekanawida approached him and talked about a dream of brotherhood, to band together the Iroquois tribes and eventually all the world.

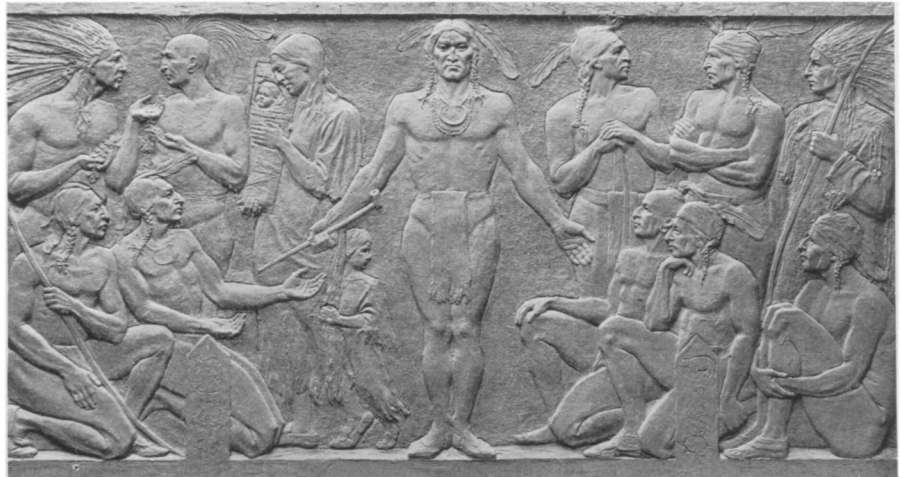
For thirty years, the two Indian reformers worked to end warfare, murder, and strife. They were, Mr. Hewitt says, like an Indian Messiah and St. Paul. Dekanawida evolved the plans. Hiawatha was his mouthpiece, eloquently arousing the tribes to the new cause. Some Indians today say that Dekanawida had a speech impediment, and therefore without Hiawatha he could never have given his message to the people.

Indian League of Nations

Out of the thirty years of political campaigning grew the remarkable League of the Iroquois. Five Indian nations in the region of New York and nearby Canada were banded together in this League of brotherhood and peace. Later a sixth nation was added. Each nation kept its independence. But each nation sent representatives to sit at a central council, to decide important matters. That was in its way the Congress of the Indian United States.

Only six tribes ever joined Dekanawida's and Hiawatha's league. But Mr. Hewitt thinks that the Indian reformers' dream may have had an even more far-reaching effect.

If Thomas Jefferson did not model the United States after the Indian league, where else did he get the idea? Nowhere in Europe was there such a government—a group of political or-



AN INDIAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

As Hiawatha and Dekanawida evolved it. The central figure is Dekanawida himself, and seated on either side are representatives of the five Iroquois nations. In the background appear to be the usual fringe types of any Congress—tourists, lobbyists, perhaps even reporters. This very beautiful panel is in the Wellesville, N. Y., Post Office.

ganizations bound together securely, yet without sacrificing their independence.

If Mr. Hewitt is right in this speculation, then Hiawatha and Dekanawida deserve high pedestals in an American hall of fame.

Of all this sixteenth century Indian history, the poet Longfellow knew nothing. Longfellow never visited an Indian reservation in his life; so Alice Longfellow once stated plainly, to settle argument.

After all, Longfellow was a poet, not a scientist or historian. He did the best he could with the reference books of his day. The trouble was that scientific study of Indians was in a pioneer stage early in the nineteenth century. For his story of Hiawatha and for local color, Longfellow turned mainly to writings of an ethnologist named Henry Schoolcraft. This man Schoolcraft was one of the first to do scientific research among the Iroquoian tribes, and while he was an eager investigator, he was like a man wandering in a tremendous maze of strange languages and customs. Frequently, Schoolcraft got muddled, especially over the subtleties of Indian names and languages. Sometimes he put two and two together and made five or six of it without much doubting or hesitation.

So, Mr. Hewitt explains, when Iroquois Indians told Schoolcraft about their heroes Dekanawida and Hayenawatha, the latter name was the only one that stuck in Schoolcraft's memory. He caught and wrote down the name Hiawatha because it sounded to him vaguely like the name he had heard for

an Indian god. By the time he got his notes shaped up for publication, Schoolcraft had mixed together not merely two characters, but three, to make one.

He had in the meantime gone among the Chippewa Indians of the Great Lakes country and heard all about their God of Life, so he added this Chippewa deity to his mixture of Hiawatha and Dekanawida. The result of mixing the three characters was as fantastic as if he had scrambled together everything he could find about Alexander the Great, Aristotle, and the Greek god Zeus.

In the composite Indian put together by Schoolcraft, very little Hiawatha except the name survived. The Song of Hiawatha as it turned out would better have been called the Song of Dekanawida, Mr. Hewitt points out. It is Dekanawida's thoughts on brotherhood that lift the literary "Hiawatha" to philosophic heights.

Poets have picked the wrong hero to immortalize more than once. A few years ago, Longfellow's poem on the midnight ride of Paul Revere was under critical fire. It was brought out then that the leading role in the Revolutionary adventure was taken by an ancestor of Col. Charles Dawes, Vice President of the Coolidge administration. Revere, patriot as he was and famous for many other achievements, was a secondary figure in the business of warning and signaling the Colonists, so the reports stated.

Hiawatha should have been called Dekanawida by Longfellow. The real career of the real Hiawatha would have made another great poem. And there

was no such girl as Minnehaha.

The real Hiawatha married twice but not to any lovely maid of the Dacotahs by the name of Laughing Water. Dekanawida devoted his life to his mission of bringing peace to the tribes, and nothing is said about his marrying.

It is believed that Longfellow got the singing name for Hiawatha's bride out of a book on the Sioux. In this book he read the legend about the beautiful waterfall in Minnesota known as the Minnehaha or Laughing Waters.

School children learn about Indians from Hiawatha, and that means that they get their introduction to Indian life as it was among Chippewa Indians, on the forest shores of Lake Superior. When Schoolcraft mixed a Chippewa god in with his Iroquois Indians to make Hiawatha, he gave him a Chippewa background. Schoolcraft found the Chippewas more interesting than the Iroquois. In fact, he became so intensely interested in one Chippewa that he married her.

When Longfellow studied the Schoolcraft legends, therefore, and wrote the lines beginning, "Give me of your bark, O Birch tree," he was describing a Chippewa canoe. An Iroquois would have made his canoe of slippery elm bark, for no canoe birch grew in New York State.

Longfellow's poem, as science sees it, is fantasy with a remote and confused historic background. But the spirit of "Hiawatha" is the spirit of the red man at his best. The forest life of the Chippewa described by the poet has given many a school child a glimpse into the Indian's lost world. And now science has given back to Dekanawida and Hiawatha their proper place in the roll of fame. So all's well that ends well.

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**THE DEPRESSION
 AND THE
 NATION'S HEALTH**

an address by
Edgar Sydenstricker
 Director, Public Health
 Activities, Milbank
 Memorial Fund

Wednesday, Aug. 29, at 3:30
 p. m., Eastern Standard
 Time, over Stations of the
 Columbia Broadcasting Sys-
 tem. Each week a prominent
 scientist speaks over the
 Columbia System under the
 auspices of Science Service.

PHYSIOLOGY

Curse of the Hapsburgs Claimed Spanish Prince

Alfonso's Son Inherited Fatal Bleeding Tendency From His Mother, Though Women are Never "Bleeders"

HEMOPHILIA, the hereditary disease of bleeding, that contributed to the death of ex-King Alfonso's fourth son, Prince Gonzalo, is one of the strangest of maladies.

It affects only the male but it is transmitted only by the female who herself does not have the difficulty. It thus skips a generation.

In the case of the ex-royal family of Spain, Queen Victoria, though herself not hemophiliac, nevertheless passed on to some of her sons the liability of severe and recurring bleeding. The eldest son, Prince Alfonso, who renounced his right to the now non-existent throne of Spain in order to marry a commoner, is also known to be a "bleeder," while the other two sons are reported as not being so afflicted.

In another way the "bleeding disease" has brought tragedy into the life of Spain's ex-royal family. Ex-King Alfonso in 1931 forbade his two daughters to marry because he realized the danger that they might transmit this ailment to some of their sons. This command broke off the engagement of the Infanta Beatriz to Prince Alvaro d'Orleans. By a coincidence it was the Infanta Beatriz who was driving at the time of the slight but fatal auto accident to Prince Gonzalo.

The disease also existed in the family of the last of the Romanoffs, Tsar Nicholas II. Alexis, the late Tsarevitch, was hemophiliac. It is said that the bleeding strain entered the royal families of Europe from the Hapsburgs, the ancient imperial family of Austria, and the disease has been called the "curse of the Hapsburgs."

Science has searched in vain for some simple method of determining whether or not a woman is a carrier of the ailment and is capable of passing it on to her sons. The only way to distinguish between those who carry and those who do not carry the hereditary strain is the practically useless method of waiting until sons and grandsons have been produced. Two tests, one of blood type and

the other a reaction with cobra venom, have been produced, but neither has proved successful.

Experiments by Dr. Carroll La Fleur Birch of the University of Illinois College of Medicine hold out hope that injections of one of the female sex hormones may be useful in treating the disease. Working on the theory that there must be some factor in the woman which suppresses the disease when it is present in her hereditary make-up, Dr. Birch hit upon ovarian extract as the probable element in the female mechanism that held the disease in abeyance. He therefore tried this substance in treating two boy "bleeders" with encouraging results. Other physicians did not have the same success but the experiments are in progress.

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PHYSICS

New X-Ray Method Makes Quick Analyses Possible

BY HOLDING a piece of metal up to a beam of X-rays it is now possible to tell quickly what are its chemical constituents. This is the seemingly magical method of analyzing metallic substances announced by Dr. L. V. Hamos of Stockholm.

The Swedish investigator has already built himself metallic "sandwiches" consisting of paper-like strips of metal piled one on top of the other. By shining X-rays at the laminated edge of the metal "sandwich" Dr. Hamos has been able to tell what kind of metal was used for each layer. In some cases the edge of the metal strips was only 1/250 of an inch thick.

Reporting his new method of chemical analysis to *Nature*, Dr. Hamos explains that when the initial beam of X-rays (all of the same wavelength) strikes the laminated edge it produces secondary X-rays, which come off from each of the various kinds of metal illuminated by the primary beam. These secondary X-rays are characteristic for