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SKETCH OF HON. LEWIS H. MORGAN.

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SKETCH

OF

HON. LEWIS H. MORGAN.

BY F. W. PUTNAM. ^{revised} 1839-1915.

[FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS
AND SCIENCES, VOL. XVII., MAY, 1882.]

LEWIS HENRY MORGAN, LL.D.

THE HON. LEWIS H. MORGAN was made a Fellow of the Academy in 1868. His parents were of old New England stock, and of this he often spoke with feelings of satisfaction. His father was descended from James Morgan, who settled near Boston in 1646, and his mother from John Steele, who had a home near Cambridge in 1641. At the time of his birth, Nov. 21, 1818, his parents resided in the village of Aurora, in Cayuga County, N. Y. He had the advantage of an excellent preliminary education, and was graduated at Union College in 1840. He afterwards studied law, and was admitted to the bar. Making his home at Rochester, N. Y., his zeal and honesty soon secured him a large and profitable practice in his profession. In business he was associated with his classmate, Judge George H. Danforth.

In 1855 he became interested in the projected railroad from Marquette to the iron region on the south shore of Lake Superior, and in the development of the iron mines. The management of these enter-

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prises, from which he derived a considerable property, caused him gradually to withdraw from the practice of his profession, and induced him to make excursions into what was then the wilderness of Northern Michigan. It was during these explorations that he became interested in the habits and works of the Beaver, — a study which he followed for several years as opportunities offered, and the results of which he gave to the world, in 1868, in an octavo volume entitled "The American Beaver and his Works." This is a most thorough and interesting biological treatise, of which the late Dr. Jeffries Wyman remarked that it came the nearest to perfection of any work of its kind he had ever read.

It is however to his labors in anthropology that Mr. Morgan owes his wide-spread fame, and it is of interest to note the probable cause of his turning his attention to the study of Indian life. On his return from college he joined a secret society, known as the "Gordian Knot," composed of the young men of the village. Chiefly by his influence, this society was enlarged and reorganized, and became the "New Confederacy of the Iroquois." The society held its councils in the woods at night. It was founded upon the ancient Confederacy of the Five Nations; and its symbolic council-fires were kindled upon the ancient territories of the Mohawks, the Oneidas, the Onondagas, the Cayugas, and the Senecas. Its objects were to gather the fragments of the history, institutions, and government of the Indians and to encourage a kinder feeling towards them. A friend writes that "many of its members have since become distinguished in various walks of life, but upon none of them was its influence so persuasive and so permanent as upon Mr. Morgan. It gave direction to his thought, and stimulus to his energies. In order that it might be in conformity with its model, he visited the tribes in New York and Canada, even then remnants, but retaining, so far as they were able, their ancient laws and customs. These he investigated, and soon became deeply interested in them."

On his removal to Rochester his studies of Indian institutions were continued, and in 1846 he attended day after day a Grand Council of the Indians at the Tonawanda reservation; and in April of the same year he went to Washington to plead in behalf of the Indians against the great injustice done them in taking away some of their lands. While on this journey he attended a meeting of the New York Historical Society, of which he had been elected a member, and read his first public paper on the subject to which he had given so much time and thought. This paper is not printed in the "Proceedings

of the Society," but is referred to as "an Essay on the Constitutional Government of the Six Nations of Indians." The substance of it is probably included in the series of fourteen "Letters on the Iroquois" addressed to Albert Gallatin, LL.D., the president of the society, and published in the several numbers of the "American Review,"* from February to December, 1847, under the *nom de plume* of *Skenandoah*.

These letters were followed by several instructive reports to the Regents of the University of the State of New York, upon Indian remains in that State, and on the "Fabrics of the Iroquois," all bearing evidence of his great interest and activity in the study of Indian life and institutions. These several papers were afterwards rewritten and enlarged, and published in book form in 1851, under the well-known title of "League of the Iroquois." This work at once attracted general attention, and secured for its author a well-earned position in literature. It contains a careful analysis of the social organization and government of the powerful and famous confederacy, with many details relating to Indian life.

In 1847 Mr. Morgan again attended a council of the Iroquois, and on Oct. 31, 1847, he was regularly adopted into the Hawk gens of the Senecas, and given the name of *Ta-yā-da-wah-kugh* (one lying across†), as the son of Jemmy Johnson, the interpreter, and grandson of the famous Red Jacket. As a member of the Seneca tribe he was better able than before to continue his studies of the social institutions of the remnants of the tribes forming the ancient confederacy. Ten years after this, at the Montreal meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, he read a paper on "The Laws of Descent of the Iroquois," which furnished the basis of one of the most important generalizations in relation to American ethnology. In 1858, in an encampment of Ojibwa Indians at Marquette, he found that their system of kinship was substantially the same as that of the Iroquois. The conclusions which he drew from this discovery are clearly given in the paper which he read before the Academy at its meeting on Feb. 11, 1868, entitled "A Conjectural Solution of the Origin of the Classificatory System of Relationship."‡ This paper is

* The American Review : a Whig Journal of Politics, Literature, Art, and Science, vols. v. and vi. New York, 1847.

† The meaning of this name is that he was to put himself across the pathway of communication, and preserve friendship between the two races.

‡ This paper is printed in full in the Proceedings of the Academy, Vol. VII. pp. 436-477.

in fact a *résumé* of his great work which was then passing through the press, and appeared as a thick quarto volume of the Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge, published in 1870, under the title of "Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family." This volume is literally one of facts, from which most important conclusions are constantly being drawn. As Mr. Morgan states, it contains the systems of relationship of "four-fifths, numerically, of the entire human family."

During the years in which these materials were being collected Mr. Morgan was not idle, but was gradually obtaining information for future contributions, both by study in his well-stored library and by personal expeditions among the Indian tribes of the West and of Hudson Bay Territory. This also was the most active period of his literary life, several of the papers which were afterwards revised and printed having been sketched during this time. Among the most important of these were contributions to the "North American Review," from 1869 to 1876, under the titles of "The Seven Cities of Cibola," "Indian Migrations," "Montezuma's Dinner," and the "Houses of the Mound-Builders." Probably the paper of 1876, entitled "Montezuma's Dinner," is the most characteristic of what has been called the "Morgan school" of ethnology. In it he showed that the commonly received statements relating to the Aztec civilization were founded on misconceptions and exaggerations, and that the Mexican confederacy, reviewed in the light of knowledge derived from a study of the social and tribal institutions of the Indians of America, would be found to form no exception to the democratic military and priestly government founded on the gentile system common to the American tribes.

Mr. Morgan always chose forcible language in expressing his ideas, and he held fast to theories which he believed to be well founded. The recent extended investigations which have brought many additional facts to light will naturally lead to the criticism of some of the theories which he formed, from the facts at his disposal, during the active period of his literary work; but while such as were constructed of loose materials will fall, and none would have been more ready than he to pull them down in the cause of truth, the great principles which his researches have brought out are so apparently beyond controversy that they will ever stand as the rocks against which the wild and sensational theories will be dashed, and as foundations upon which to build in the further study of American archaeology and ethnology.

Mr. Morgan's last excursion was to the ancient and modern pueblos of Colorado and New Mexico in 1878, and was undertaken primarily

for the purpose of confirming his conceptions in relation to the development of house life among the Indian tribes. In "House Life and Architecture of the North American Indians," expressing his views of communal living among the village Indians, we particularly notice the persistency with which he clung to his early theories on this subject. This was his latest work, published only a few weeks before his death.

While his "Systems of Affinity and Consanguinity," "League of the Iroquois," and paper on the Mexican civilization will ever stand as monuments of his industry and research, and give to him enduring fame, he will be most widely known by his more popular volume of 1877, "Ancient Society, or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery, through Barbarism, to Civilization," which is, in fact, the embodiment of the most important of his researches, the grand summing up of many years of industrious labor and deep thought. A thorough evolutionist in his treatment of the subjects of his volume, he commences the Preface with the statement that "The great antiquity of mankind upon earth has been conclusively established," and goes on to state that "this knowledge changes materially the views which have prevailed respecting the relations of savages to barbarians, and of barbarians to civilized men. It can now be asserted upon convincing evidence that savagery preceded barbarism in all the tribes of mankind, as barbarism is known to have preceded civilization. The history of the human race is one in source, one in experience, and one in progress." He then on the second and third pages writes, that "Inventions and discoveries stand in serial relations along the lines of human progress and register its successive stages, while social and civil institutions, in virtue of perpetual human wants, have been developed from a few primary germs of thought. They exhibit a similar register of progress. . . . Throughout the latter part of the period of savagery, and the entire period of barbarism, mankind in general were organized in gentes, phratries, and tribes. . . . The principal institutions of mankind originated in savagery, were developed in barbarism, and are maturing in civilization. In like manner the family has passed through successive forms, and created great systems of consanguinity and affinity, which have remained to the present time. . . . The idea of property has undergone a similar growth and development. Commencing at zero in savagery, the passion for the possession of property, as the representative of accumulated subsistence, has now become dominant over the human mind in civilized races." He then writes that "The four classes of facts above

indicated, and which extend themselves in parallel lines along the pathways of human progress from savagery to civilization, form the principal subjects of discussion in this volume."

These quotations are sufficient to convey an idea of the substance of the volume and the principles which its author has set forth. To follow his scholarly statements and call attention in detail to the important deductions he has drawn, particularly in relation to American ethnology, would be impossible in this brief notice of the labors of one who has done so much.

In social life Mr. Morgan was much beloved for his kind and genial ways, and at Rochester his house, with its large hall, in which were his library and collections, was often the gathering place of scholars and scientists, and there the well-known literary Club, of which he was one of the founders a quarter of a century ago, often met to discuss the papers which he brought before them. Ever active as a citizen in all good works, he was twice honored by public offices: in 1861 he was a member of the State Assembly, and in 1867 he was a Senator. In both these capacities he was distinguished as the uncompromising foe of all vicious measures, and his fair name was never sullied by even the insinuation of corrupt or double dealing.

From his great interest in the Indian tribes and from his knowledge of the natural course of the development of civilization, he always took to heart the unfortunate condition of the Indians and the unnatural methods which were pursued by Government in relation to their civilization, and often urged, as occasions arose, the desirability of leading the Indians to civilization by making them self-sustaining as a pastoral people, writing several letters to the press, particularly to the "Nation," in which are presented forcible reasons for following such a plan.

Mr. Morgan was a member of numerous historical and scientific societies, and in 1879 he was elected President of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and presided over the meeting held in Boston the following year. At this time it was noticed that his strength was failing, and, although he had much enjoyment at the meeting, he remarked that it would probably be the last time he should meet with the Association, and that he so much the more appreciated the honor which had been conferred upon him. From that time he slowly declined, and died at his home, at the age of sixty-three, on Dec. 17, 1881.

Mr. Morgan was married in 1851 to Mary E., daughter of the late Lemuel Steele, of Albany, N. Y., who, with one son, survives him.

A sad calamity caused the death of his two daughters in 1862, and at that time, as Mr. Morgan was much interested in plans for the higher education of women, he endeavored to establish in Rochester a college for women, to which he proposed to make a memorial endowment; but his efforts were not entirely successful. He then resolved to leave the whole of his property for the purpose after the decease of his wife and son, hoping that others would unite in making the fund ample for such an institution. In pursuance of this object he has left his entire and considerable property in trust to the University of Rochester for the final establishment of a college for women.

In the "Popular Science Monthly" for November, 1880, there is a good portrait of Mr. Morgan as President of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, accompanied by an account of his life written by Major J. W. Powell.

In this short sketch no attempt has been made to mention all the publications of which Mr. Morgan was the author. A full list of his papers is desirable, as they are widely scattered, and several are but little known, and difficult to obtain. The following list gives the titles of those which have come under the writer's notice:—

Letters (1-14) on the Iroquois, "by Skenandoah," addressed to Albert Gallatin, LL.D., President of the New York Historical Society. (*The American Review: a Whig Journal of Politics, Literature, Art, and Science.* Vols. v., vi. February-December, 1847.) New York. 8°.

Communications to the Regents of the New York State University: An Account of Indian Pipes, Fortifications, &c., in New York, 1848. (Second Annual Report of the Regents of the University of the State of New York.) 1849. Albany. 8°. Illustrated.

Report upon the Articles furnished the Indian Collection, 1849. (Third Annual Report of the Regents of the University of the State of New York.) 1850. Albany. 8°. Illustrated.

The Fabrics of the Iroquois. (Reprint in part of Report to the Regents of the New York State University. *Stryker's American Register and Magazine.* July, 1850. Vol. iv.) Trenton. 8°. Illustrated.

Schedule of Articles obtained from the Indians in Western New York and on Grand River, Canada. Abstract of Report. (Third and Fifth Annual Reports of the Regents of the University on the State Cabinet of Natural History.) Albany, 1850, 1852. 8°.

League of the Ho-dé-no-sau-nee, or Iroquois. Rochester, 1851. 8°. Illustrated.

Report on the Fabrics, Inventions, Implements, and Utensils of the Iroquois. (Fifth Annual Report of the Regents of the State of New York, 1851.) Albany, 1852. 8°. Illustrated.

List of [198] Articles manufactured by the Indians of Western New York and Canada West, with their Indian names. (*Catalogue of the Cabinet of Natural History of the State of New York.*) Albany, 1853. 8°.

Laws of Descent of the Iroquois. (Proceedings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Montreal Meeting, 1857.) Vol. xi. Cambridge, 1858. 8°.

The Indian Mode of Bestowing and Changing Names. (Proceedings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Springfield Meeting, 1859.) Vol. xiii. Cambridge, 1860. 8°.

Circular in Reference to the Degrees of Relationship among Different Nations. (Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections. Vol. ii.) 1860. 8°.

Suggestions relative to an Ethnological Map of North America, 36 by 44 inches. (Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution for 1861.) 1862. 8°.

A Conjectural Solution of the Origin of the Classificatory System of Relationship. (Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, February, 1868.) Vol. vii. Boston, 1868. 8°.

The American Beaver and his Works. Philadelphia. 1868. 8°. Illustrated.
The "Seven Cities of Cibola." (North American Review. Vol. cviii. April, 1869.) Boston, 1869. 8°.

Indian Migrations. (North American Review. Vol. cix. Oct., 1869; Vol. cx. Jan., 1870.) Boston, 1869, 1870. 8°.

The Stone and Bone Implements of the Arickarees. (Twenty-first Annual Report of the Regents of the University of the State of New York on the State Cabinet of Natural History, 1868.) Albany, 1871. 8°. Illustrated.

Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family. (Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge. 218.) Washington, 1871. 4°.

Australian Kinship. From Original Memoranda of Rev. Lorimer Fison. (Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, March, 1872. Vol. viii.) Boston, 1873. 8°.

Ethical Periods. (Proceedings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Detroit Meeting, 1875.) Vol. xxiv. Salem, 1876. 8°.

Arts of Subsistence. (Proceedings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Detroit Meeting, 1875.) Vol. xxiv. Salem, 1876. 8°.

Houses of the Mound-Builders. (North American Review. Vol. cxxiii. July, 1876.) Boston, 1876. 8°.

Montezuma's Dinner. (North American Review. Vol. cxxii. 1876.) Boston, 1876. 8°.

Ancient Society, or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization. New York, 1877. 8°.

On the Ruins of a Stone Pueblo on the Animas River in New Mexico: with a Ground Plan. (Twelfth Annual Report, Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology.) Cambridge, 1880. 8°.

Objects of an Expedition to New Mexico and Central America. (Statement presented to the Archaeological Institute of America, March, 1880.) Boston. 8°.

A Study of the Houses of the American Aborigines, with a Scheme of Exploration of the Ruins in New Mexico and elsewhere. (First Annual Report of the Archaeological Institute of America.) 1880. 8°. Illustrated.

Houses and House-life of the American Aborigines. (Contributions to American Ethnology. Vol. iv.) Department of the Interior. Washington. 1881. 4°. Illustrated.

