

[175] CHAPTER VII.

OF THE ORDER THE HURONS OBSERVE IN THEIR
COUNCILS.

I SHALL speak here of the general Councils or Assemblies, the special ones being ordered in almost the same way, although with less display.

These general Assemblies are, as it were, the States-General of the Country, and consequently they take place only so often as necessity requires. The place of these is usually the Village of the principal Captain of the whole Country. The Council Chamber is sometimes the Cabin of this Captain, adorned with mats, or strewn with Fir branches, with several fires, according to the season of the year. Formerly, each one brought his fagot to put on the fire; this is now no longer the custom, the women of the Cabin take this responsibility; they make the fires, but do not warm themselves thereat, going outside to give place to Messieurs the Councilors. Sometimes the assembly takes place in the midst of the Village, if it is Summer; and [176] sometimes also in the obscurity of the forest, apart, when affairs demand secrecy. The time is oftener night than day, whole nights often being passed in council.

The Head of the Council is the Captain who calls it. Matters are decided by a plurality of votes, in which the authority of the Captains draws over many to their views; in fact, the usual way of coming to a decision is to say to the Old Men, *Do you give advice; you are the Masters.*