

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE SOLEMN FEAST OF THE DEAD.

THE feast of the Dead is the most renowned ceremony among the Hurons; [194] they give it the name of feast because, as I shall now fully relate, when the bodies are taken from their Cemeteries, each Captain makes a feast for the souls in his Village,—the most considerable and most magnificent having been that of the Master of the Feast, who is for that reason called *par excellence*, the Master of the feast.

This Feast abounds in ceremonies, but you might say that the principal ceremony is that of the kettle; this latter overshadows all the rest, and the feast of the Dead is hardly mentioned, even in the most important Councils, except under the name of “the kettle.” They appropriate to it all the terms of cookery, so that, in speaking of hastening or of putting off the feast of the Dead, they will speak of scattering or of stirring up the fire beneath the kettle; and, employing this way of speaking, one who should say “the kettle is overturned,” would mean that there would be no feast of the Dead.

Now usually there is only a single feast in each Nation; all the bodies are put into a common pit. I say, usually, for this year, which has happened to be the feast of the Dead, the kettle has been divided; [195] and five Villages of the part where we are have acted by themselves, and have put their dead into a