

JOURNAL
OF A
VOYAGE
TO
NORTH-AMERICA.

Undertaken by ORDER of the

FRENCH KING.

CONTAINING

The GEOGRAPHICAL Description and Natural
History of that Country, particularly

CANADA.

TOGETHER WITH

An Account of the CUSTOMS, CHARACTERS,
RELIGION, MANNERS and TRADITIONS
of the original Inhabitants.

In a Series of Letters to the Ducheſs of LESDIGUIERES.

Translated from the French of P. DE CHARLEVOIX.

VOL. II.

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MDCCLXI.

toise. The chief of each family bears its name, and in all public deeds he is known by no other. The same thing happens with regard to the chief of a nation, as well as of every village: but besides this name, which is only a sort of representative appellation, they have another, which distinguishes them more particularly, and which is properly a mark of dignity: thus, one is called the most noble, another the most ancient, and so forth. Lastly, they have a third which is personal; but I should be apt to believe, that this custom prevails only amongst those nations where the office of chief is hereditary.

These titles are always imposed with great ceremony; the new chief, or, in case he is too young, he who represents him, is to make a feast, bestow presents, pronounce the elogium of their predecessor, and sing his song. There are, however, some personal names in so much veneration, that no one dares to appropriate them to himself; or which are at least a long time before they are renewed; when this is done, it is called raising the person to life who formerly bore it.

In the northern parts, and wherever the Algonquin tongue prevails, the dignity of chief is elective; and the whole ceremony of election and installation consists in some feasts, accompanied with dances and songs: the chief elect likewise never fails to make the panegyrick of his predecessor, and to invoke his genius. Amongst the Hurons, where this dignity is hereditary, the succession is continued through the women, so that at the death of a chief, it is not his own, but his sister's son who succeeds him; or, in default of which, his nearest relation in the female line. When the whole

branch happens to be extinct, the noblest matron of the tribe or in the nation chuses the person she approves of most, and declares him chief. The person who is to govern must be come to years of maturity ; and when the hereditary chief is not as yet arrived at this period, they appoint a regent, who has all the authority, but which he holds in name of the minor. These chiefs generally have no great marks of outward respect paid them, and if they are never disobeyed, it is because they know how to set bounds to their authority. It is true that they request or propose, rather than command ; and never exceed the boundaries of that small share of authority with which they are vested. Thus it is properly reason which governs, and the government has so much the more influence, as obedience is founded in liberty ; and that they are free from any apprehension of its degenerating into tyranny.

Nay more, each family has a right to chuse a counsellor of its own, and an assistant to the chief, who is to watch for their interest ; and without whose consent the chief can undertake nothing. These counsellors are, above all things, to have an eye to the public treasury ; and it is properly they who determine the uses it is to be put to. They are invested with this character in a general council, but they do not acquaint their allies with it, as they do at the elections and installations of their chief. Amongst the Huron nations, the women name the counsellors, and often chuse persons of their own sex.

This body of counsellors or assistants is the highest of all ; the next is that of the elders, consisting of all those who have come to the years of maturity. I have not been able to find exactly what

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what this age is. The last of all is that of the warriors; this comprehends all who are able to bear arms. This body has often at its head, the chief of the nation or town; but he must first have distinguished himself by some signal action of bravery; if not, he is obliged to serve as a subaltern, that is, as a single sentinel; there being no degrees in the militia of the Indians.

In fact, a large body may have several chiefs, this title being given to all who ever commanded; but they are not therefore the less subject to him who leads the party; a kind of general, without character or real authority, who has power neither to reward nor punish, whom his soldiers are at liberty to abandon at pleasure and with impunity, and whose orders notwithstanding are scarce ever disputed: so true it is, that amongst a people who are guided by reason, and inspired with sentiments of honour and love for their country, independance is not destructive of subordination; and, that a free and voluntary obedience is that on which we can always rely with the greatest certainty. Moreover, the qualities requisite are, that he be fortunate, of undoubted courage, and perfectly disinterested. It is no miracle, that a person possessed of such eminent qualities should be obeyed.

The women have the chief authority amongst all the nations of the Huron language; if we except the Iroquois canton of Onneyouth, in which it is in both sexes alternately. But if this be their lawful constitution, their practice is seldom agreeable to it. In fact, the men never tell the women any thing they would have to be kept secret; and rarely any affair of consequence is communicated

municated to them, though all is done in their name, and the chiefs are no more than their lieutenants. What I have told your grace of the grandmother of the hereditary chief of the Hurons of the Narrows, who could never obtain a missionary for her own town, is a convincing proof that the real authority of the women is very small: I have been however assured, that they always deliberate first on whatever is proposed in council; and that they afterwards give the result of their deliberation to the chiefs, who make the report of it to the general council, composed of the elders; but in all probability this is done only for form's sake, and with the restrictions I have already mentioned. The warriors likewise consult together, on what relates to their particular province, but can conclude nothing of importance which concerns the nation or town; all being subject to the examination and controul of the council of elders, who judge in the last resource.

It must be acknowledged, that proceedings are carried on in these assemblies with a wisdom and a coolness, and a knowledge of affairs, and I may add generally with a probity, which would have done honour to the areopagus of Athens, or to the senate of Rome, in the most glorious days of those republics: the reason of this is, that nothing is resolved upon with precipitation; and that those violent passions, which have so much disgraced the politics even of Christians, have never prevailed amongst the Indians over the public good. Interested persons fail not, however, to set many springs in motion, and apply an address in the execution of their designs, we could hardly believe barbarians capable of; they also all of them possess,

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sefs, in the most sovereign degree, the art of concealing their real intentions: but generally speaking, the glory of the nation and motive of honour, are the chief movers in all enterprizes. What can never be excused in them is, that they often make honour consist in satiating a revenge which knows no bounds; a fault which Christianity alone is able to correct, and in which all our politeness and religion are often unsuccessful.

Each tribe has an orator in every town, which orators are the only persons who have a liberty to speak in the public councils and general assemblies: they always speak well and to the purpose. Besides this natural eloquence, and which none who are acquainted with them will dispute, they have a perfect knowledge of the interests of their employers, and an address in placing the best side of their own cause in the most advantageous light, which nothing can exceed. On some occasions, the women have an orator, who speaks in their name, or rather acts as their interpreter.

Nations who may be said to possess nothing, neither public nor private, and who have no ambition to extend their territory, should, in appearance, have few affairs to settle with one another. But the mind of man, naturally restless, is incapable of remaining inactive, and is very sagacious in cutting out business for itself. What is certain, is, that our Indians are eternally negotiating, and have always some affairs or other on the tapis: such as the concluding or renewing of treaties, offers of service, mutual civilities, making alliances, invitations to become parties in a war, and lastly, compliments of condolance on the death of some chief or considerable person. All this is perform-

ed with a dignity, an attention, and, I may add, with a capacity equal to the most important affairs; and theirs are sometimes of greater consequence than they seem to be: for those, who are deputed for this purpose, have commonly secret instructions; so that the outward motive of their deputation is no more than a veil which covers their real designs.

The nation, which has made the first figure in Canada, for two centuries past, is that of the Iroquois: their success in war has given them a superiority over most of the others, which none of them are, any longer, in a condition to dispute with them; and from being pacifick, which they formerly were, they have become very troublesome and pragmatikal. But nothing has contributed more to render them formidable, than the advantage of their situation, which they presently discovered; and whereof they have made all possible advantage. As they were situated between us and the English, they soon found that both would be under the necessity of keeping well with them; and, indeed, it has been the chief care of both colonies, since their establishment, to gain them over to their own party, or, at least, to persuade them to stand neuter: and as they were persuaded that if either of these nations should entirely get the ascendant over the other, they must soon be subjected themselves; they have found the secret of ballancing their success; and if we reflect that their whole force united has never exceeded five or six thousand combatants, and that it is a great while since they have diminished more than one half, we must needs allow, they must have used infinite abilities and address.

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With respect to particulars and the interior government or police of towns, affairs are reduced to few articles, and are soon concluded. The authority of the chief seldom or never extends to these; and, generally speaking, persons in any degree of credit, are entirely taken up about the public business. A single affair of however little importance, is long under deliberation; every thing being conducted with much coolness and phlegm, and nothing being decided till all who are desirous have been acquainted with it. If a present has been given underhand to any of the elders, to make sure of his suffrage, you are sure to obtain it, if the present has been accepted of. It has scarce ever been known, that an Indian has failed in an engagement of this sort; but it is no easy matter to bring them to accept of it, nor does he ever receive with both hands. Young persons enter early into the knowledge of affairs, which naturally renders them grave and ripe, at an age in which we are still children; this interests them, from their tenderest infancy, in the public weal, and inspires them with an emulation which is fomented with great care, and from which there is nothing that might not be hoped for.

The greatest defect in this government is, that they have scarce the shadow of criminal justice among them; though, to say truth, it is far from being attended with the same bad effects it would certainly be amongst us: the great spring of our passions, and the chief source of those disorders which are the most pernicious to civil society, to wit, private interest, having scarce any power over men who never think of hoarding, and give themselves very little concern about to-morrow.

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We may also justly reproach them with the way in which they bring up their children: they do not so much as know what it is to correct them. Whilst they are little, they say they have no reason; and it never enters into the head of an Indian, to think that the judgment is improved by punishment; when they are come to years of discretion, they pretend to be masters of their own actions, and therefore accountable to none. They carry these maxims to such a height, as to suffer themselves to be maltreated by intoxicated persons, without so much as defending themselves for fear of hurting them. Why should we do them any evil, say they, when you talk to them of the ridiculousness of this behaviour; they know not what they do?

In a word, these Indians are perfectly convinced, that man is born free, and that no power on earth has a right to infringe his liberty, and that nothing can compensate the loss of it: and it has been found a very difficult matter to undeceive even the Christians among them, and to make them understand how, by a natural consequence of the corruption of our nature, which is the effect of sin, an unbridled liberty of doing mischief differs very little from obliging them to commit it, because of the strength of the byass which draws us to it; and that the law which restrains us, causes us to approach nearer to our original state of liberty, whilst it appears to take it from us. Happy for them, experience has not made them feel in many things all the power of this tendency which produces so many crimes elsewhere. Their understandings being narrower than ours, their desires are still more so: reduced to desire what is necessary only, for which providence has sufficiently provided, they have

LETTER XXIII.

*Sequel of the Character of the Indians and of their
Manner of living.*

River St. Joseph, August 8, 1721.

Madam,

I Resume the sequel of my memoirs where I left off. You may perhaps find fault with me for my want of order, but one may at least pardon in a relation what is admired in an ~~ode~~ ode; that which in a lyric poet is the effect of art, is the effect of necessity in a traveller, who can only relate things in proportion as he is informed of them, and who is obliged to write what is then passing before his eyes for fear of forgetting it. The children of the Indians after leaving off the use of the cradle, are under no sort of confinement, and as soon as they are able to crawl about on hands and feet, are suffered to go stark naked wherever they have a mind, through woods, water, mire and snow; which gives them strength and agility, and fortifies them against the injuries of the air and weather; but this conduct, as I have already remarked, occasions weaknesses in the stomach and breast, which destroy their constitution very early. In the summer time they run the moment

VOL. II.

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they get up to the next river or lake, where they remain a great part of the day playing, in the same manner we see fishes do in good weather, near the surface of the water. Nothing is more proper than this exercise to render the body active.

They take care likewise to put the bow and arrow into their hands betimes; and in order to excite in them that emulation which is the best mistress of the arts, there is no necessity of placing their breakfast on the top of a tree, as was formerly done to the Lacedæmonian youth; they are all born with so strong a passion for glory, as to have no need of a spur; thus they shoot their arrows with wonderful exactness, and it scarce costs them any trouble to arrive at a like dexterity in the use of our fire-arms. They also cause them wrestle together, and so keen are they in this exercise, that they would often kill one another, were they not separated in time; those who come off with the worst, are so mortified at it that they can never be at rest till they have had their revenge.

We may in general say, that fathers and mothers neglect nothing, in order to inspire their children with certain principles of honour which they preserve their whole lives, but which are often ill enough applied; and in this consists all the education that is given them. They take care always to communicate their instructions on this head, in an indirect manner. The most common way is by rehearsing to them the famous exploits of their ancestors or countrymen: the youth take fire at these recitals, and sigh for an opportunity of imitating what they have thus been made to admire. Sometimes in order to correct their faults they employ tears and entreaties, but never threats; these
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would make no manner of impression on minds which have imbibed this prejudice, that no one whatever has a right to force them to any thing.

A mother on seeing her daughter behave ill bursts into tears; and upon the other's asking her the cause of it, all the answer she makes is, Thou dishonourest me. It seldom happens that this sort of reproof fails of being efficacious. Notwithstanding, since they have had a more frequent commerce with the French, some of them begin to chastise their children, but this happens only among those that are Christians, or such as are settled in the colony. Generally the greatest punishment which the Indians make use of in chastising their children, is by throwing a little water in their face; the children are very sensible of this, and in general of every thing that looks like reproof, which is owing to this, that pride is the strongest passion at this age.

Young girls have been known to strangle themselves for a slight reprimand from their mothers, or for having a few drops of water thrown in their face, warning them of what was going to happen in such words as these, *You shall not have a daughter long to use so.* The greatest evil in this sort of education, is that what they exhort young people to is not alway virtue, or that what comes nearly to the same thing, that the ideas they give them of it are not just. In fact, nothing is so much instilled into them, whether by precept or example, as an implacable desire of revenge.

It would seem, Madam, that a childhood so ill instructed, should be followed by a very dissolute

and turbulent state of youth ; but on one hand the Indians are naturally quiet and betimes masters of themselves, and are likewise more under the guidance of reason than other men ; and on the other hand, their natural disposition, especially in the northern nations, does not incline them to debauchery. They however have some usages in which no sort of regard is paid to modesty ; but it appears that in this, superstition has a much greater share than a depravation of heart.

The Hurons when we first began to frequent them were more lascivious as well as more brutal in their pleasures. For young people of both sexes abandoned themselves, without either shame or remorse, to all kinds of dissoluteness, and it was chiefly amongst these that it was thought no crime in a girl to prostitute herself : their parents were the first to engage them in this vice, and husbands were seen to prostitute their wives for vile interest. Several of them never married, but took women to serve them to use their own expression as companions, and the only difference they reckoned between these concubines and their lawful spouses, was in their being free from any engagement with the former ; besides, their children were on the same footing with the others, which occasioned no sort of inconvenience in a country where there was nothing to inherit.

~~The nations in these parts are not distinguished by their habit : the men in hot weather have often no garment, except a shirt : In winter they wear more or fewer cloaths, in proportion to the climate. They wear on their feet a sort of socks, made of deer-skin dried in the smoke :~~