

TRANSACTIONS

— OF THE

HISTORICAL & LITERARY COMMITTEE

OF THE

AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY,

HELD AT PHILADELPHIA, FOR PROMOTING

USEFUL KNOWLEDGE.

VOL. I.

Invenies litis et facta domestica vobis ;
Sæpè tibi pater est, sæpè legendus avus.—OVID.

PHILADELPHIA :

Printed and Published by Abraham Small,

No. 112, Chestnut Street,

1819.

No. I.

AN

ACCOUNT

OF THE

HISTORY, MANNERS, AND CUSTOMS,

OF

THE INDIAN NATIONS,

WHO ONCE INHABITED PENNSYLVANIA AND

THE NEIGHBOURING STATES.

BY

THE REV. JOHN HECKEWELDER,

OF BETHLEHEM.

off with them to Sandusky, under the protection of the British Government. We have seen in a former chapter that he afterwards saw how impolitic his conduct had been, and probably wished to retrace his steps, but it was too late. He had suffered himself to be misled by his passions, excited by the remembrance of former wrongs, and thus was betrayed into his injudicious conduct. Perhaps also his jealousy of Captain White Eyes, whose superiority his proud mind could not bear, did not in a small degree contribute to it. Pipe was certainly a great man, but White Eyes was, in my opinion, the greatest of the two. I was present when he made the speech which I have related, and never shall forget the impression it made upon me.

Thus Indian politicians work and manage matters against each other without newspaper wrangles, abuse of character, personal quarrels, or open insults. Their ingenuity, when joined to a good cause, generally makes them come off victorious. In a bad cause, on the contrary, they sure to meet with detection and defeat, as Captain Pipe, for his misfortune, sadly experienced.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARRIAGE AND TREATMENT OF THEIR WIVES.

THERE are many persons who believe, from the labour that they see the Indian women perform, that they are in a manner treated as slaves. These labours, indeed, are hard, compared with the tasks that are imposed upon females in civilised society; but they are no more than their fair share, under every consideration

and due allowance, of the hardships attendant on savage life. Therefore they are not only voluntarily, but cheerfully submitted to; and as women are not obliged to live with their husbands any longer than suits their pleasure or convenience, it cannot be supposed that they would submit to be loaded with unjust or unequal burdens.

Marriages among the Indians are not, as with us, contracted for life; it is understood on both sides that the parties are not to live together any longer than they shall be pleased with each other. The husband may put away his wife whenever he pleases, and the woman may in like manner abandon her husband. Therefore the connexion is not attended with any vows, promises or ceremonies of any kind. An Indian takes a wife as it were on trial, determined, however, in his own mind not to forsake her if she behaves well, and particularly if he has children by her. The woman, sensible of this, does on her part every thing in her power to please her husband, particularly if he is a good hunter or trapper, capable of maintaining her by his skill and industry, and protecting her by his strength and courage.

When a marriage takes place, the duties and labours incumbent on each party are well known to both. It is understood that the husband is to build a house for them to dwell in, to find the necessary implements of husbandry, as axes, hoes, &c. to provide a canoe, and also dishes, bowls, and other necessary vessels for house-keeping. The woman generally has a kettle or two, and some other articles of kitchen furniture, which she brings with her. The husband, as master of the family, considers himself bound to support it by his bodily exertions, as hunting, trapping, &c.; the woman, as his *help-mate*, takes upon herself the labours of the field, and is far from considering them as more important than those to which her husband is subjected, being well satisfied that with his gun and traps he can maintain a family in any place where game is to be found: nor do they think it any hardship imposed upon them; for they themselves say, that

while their field labour employs them at most six weeks in the year, that of the men continues the whole year round.

When a couple is newly married, the husband (without saying a single word upon the subject) takes considerable pains to please his wife, and by repeated proofs of his skill and abilities in the art of hunting, to make her sensible that she can be happy with him, and that she will never want while they live together. At break of day he will be off with his gun, and often by breakfast time return home with a deer, turkey, or some other game. He endeavours to make it appear that it is in his power to bring provisions home whenever he pleases, and his wife, proud of having such a good hunter for her husband, does her utmost to serve and make herself agreeable to him.

The work of the women is not hard or difficult. They are both able and willing to do it, and always perform it with cheerfulness. Mothers teach their daughters those duties which common sense would otherwise point out to them when grown up. Within doors, their labour is very trifling; there is seldom more than one pot or kettle to attend to. There is no scrubbing of the house, and but little to wash, and that not often. Their principal occupations are to cut and fetch in the fire wood, till the ground, sow and reap the grain, and pound the corn in mortars for their pottage, and to make bread which they bake in the ashes. When going on a journey, or to hunting camps with their husbands, if they have no horses, they carry a pack on their backs which often appears heavier than it really is; it generally consists of a blanket, a dressed deer skin for mocksens, a few articles of kitchen furniture, as a kettle, bowl or dish, with spoons and some bread, corn, salt, &c. for their nourishment. I have never known an Indian woman complain of the hardship of carrying this burden, which serves for their own comfort and support as well as of their husbands.

The tilling of the ground at home, getting of the fire wood, and pounding of corn in mortars, is frequently done by female parties, much in the manner of those husking, quilting and other frolics (as they are called,) which are so common in some parts of the United States, particularly to the eastward. The labour is thus quickly and easily performed; when it is over, and sometimes in intervals, they sit down to enjoy themselves by feasting on some good victuals, prepared for them by the person or family for whom they work, and which the man has taken care to provide before hand from the woods; for this is considered a principal part of the business, as there are generally more or less of the females assembled who have not, perhaps for a long time, tasted a morsel of meat, being either widows, or orphans, or otherwise in straitened circumstances. Even the chat which passes during their joint labours is highly diverting to them, and so they seek to be employed in this way as long as they can, by going round to all those in the village who have ground to till.

When the harvest is in, which generally happens by the end of September, the women have little else to do than to prepare the daily victuals, and get fire wood, until the latter end of February or beginning of March, as the season is more or less backward, when they go to their sugar camps, where they extract sugar from the maple tree. The men having built or repaired their temporary cabin, and made all the troughs of various sizes, the women commence making sugar, while the men are looking out for meat, at this time generally fat bears, which are still in their winter quarters. When at home, they will occasionally assist their wives in gathering the sap, and watch the kettles in their absence, that the syrup may not boil over.

A man who wishes his wife to be with him while he is out hunting in the woods, needs only tell her, that on such a day they will go to such a place, where he will

hunt for a length of time, and she will be sure to have provisions and every thing else that is necessary in complete readiness, and well packed up to carry to the spot; for the man, as soon as he enters the woods, has to be looking out and about for game, and therefore cannot be encumbered with any burden; after wounding a deer, he may have to pursue it for several miles, often running it fairly down. The woman, therefore, takes charge of the baggage, brings it to the place of encampment; and there, immediately enters on the duties of house-keeping, as if they were at home; she moreover takes pains to dry as much meat as she can, that none may be lost; she carefully puts the tallow up, assists in drying the skins, gathers as much wild hemp as possible for the purpose of making strings, carrying bands, bags and other necessary articles, collects roots for dyeing; in short does every thing in her power to leave no care to her husband but the important one of providing meat for the family.

After all, the fatigue of the women is by no means to be compared to that of the men. Their hard and difficult employments are periodical and of short duration, while their husband's labours are constant and severe in the extreme. Were a man to take upon himself a part of his wife's duty, in addition to his own, he must necessarily sink under the load, and of course his family must suffer with him. On his exertions as a hunter, their existence depends; in order to be able to follow that rough employment with success, he must keep his limbs as supple as he can, he must avoid hard labour as much as possible, that his joints may not become stiffened, and that he may preserve the necessary strength and agility of body to enable him to pursue the chase; and bear the unavoidable hardships attendant on it; for the fatigues of hunting wear out the body and constitution far more than manual labour. Neither creeks nor rivers, whether shallow or deep, frozen or free

from ice, must be an obstacle to the hunter, when in pursuit of a wounded deer, bear, or other animal, as is often the case. Nor has he then leisure to think on the state of his body, and to consider whether his blood is not too much heated to plunge without danger into the cold stream, since the game he is in pursuit of is running off from him with full speed. Many dangerous accidents often befall him, both as a hunter and a warrior, (for he is both) and are seldom unattended with painful consequences, such as rheumatism or consumption of the lungs, for which the sweat-house, on which they so much depend, and to which they often resort for relief, especially after a fatiguing hunt or warlike excursion, is not always a sure preservative or an effectual remedy.

The husband generally leaves the skins and peltry which he has procured by hunting to the care of his wife, who sells or barter them away to the best advantage for such necessaries as are wanted in the family; not forgetting to supply her husband with what he stands in need of, who, when he receives it from her hands never fails to return her thanks in the kindest manner. If debts had been previously contracted, either by the woman, or by her and her husband jointly, or if a horse should be wanted, as much is laid aside as will be sufficient to pay the debts or purchase the horse.

When a woman has got in her harvest of corn, it is considered as belonging to her husband, who, if he has suffering friends, may give them as much of it as he pleases, without consulting his wife, or being afraid of her being displeased; for she is in the firm belief that he is able to procure that article whenever it is wanted. The sugar which she makes out of the maple tree is also considered as belonging to her husband.

There is nothing in an Indian's house or family without its particular owner. Every individual knows what belongs to him, from the horse or cow down to the dog,

cat, kitten and little chicken. Parents make presents to their children, and they in return to their parents. A father will sometimes ask his wife or one of his children for the loan of his horse to go out a hunting. For a litter of kittens or brood of chickens, there are often as many different owners as there are individual animals. In purchasing a hen with her brood, one frequently has to deal for it with several children. Thus, while the principle of community of goods prevails in the state, the rights of property are acknowledged among the members of a family. This is attended with a very good effect; for by this means every living creature is properly taken care of. It also promotes liberality among the children, which becomes a habit with them by the time they are grown up.

An Indian loves to see his wife well clothed, which is a proof that he is fond of her; at least, it is so considered. While his wife is bartering the skins and peltry he has taken in his hunt, he will seat himself at some distance, to observe her choice, and how she and the traders agree together. When she finds an article which she thinks will suit or please her husband, she never fails to purchase it for him; she tells him that it is *her* choice, and he is never dissatisfied.

The more a man does for his wife, the more he is esteemed, particularly by the women, who will say: "This man surely loves his wife." Some men at their leisure hours make bowls and ladles, which, when finished, are at their wives' disposal.

If a sick or pregnant woman longs for any article of food, be it what it may, and however difficult to be procured, the husband immediately sets out to endeavour to get it. I have known a man to go forty or fifty miles for a mess of cranberries to satisfy his wife's longing. In the year 1762, I was witness to a remarkable instance of the disposition of Indians to indulge their wives. There was a famine in the land, and a sick Indian woman ex-

pressed a great desire for a mess of Indian corn. Her husband having heard that a trader at Lower Sandusky had a little, set off on horseback for that place, one hundred miles distant, and returned with as much corn as filled the crown of his hat, for which he gave his horse in exchange, and came home on foot, bringing his saddle back with him. Squirrels, ducks, and other like delicacies, when most difficult to be obtained, are what women in the first stage of their pregnancy generally long for. The husband in every such case will go out and spare no pains nor trouble until he has procured what is wanted.

In other cases, the men and their wives do not in general trouble themselves with each other's business; but the wife, knowing that the father is very fond of his children, is always prepared to tell him some diverting anecdote of one or the other of them, especially if he has been absent for some time.

It very seldom happens that a man condescends to quarrel with his wife, or abuse her, though she has given him just cause. In such a case the man, without replying, or saying a single word, will take his gun and go into the woods, and remain there a week or perhaps a fortnight, living on the meat he has killed, before he returns home again; well knowing that he cannot inflict a greater punishment on his wife for her conduct to him than by absenting himself for a while; for she is not only kept in suspense, uncertain whether he will return again, but is soon reported as a bad and quarrelsome woman; for, as on those occasions, the man does not tell his wife on what day or at what time he will be back again, which he otherwise, when they are on good terms, never neglects to do, she is at once put to shame by her neighbours, who soon suspecting something, do not fail to put such questions to her, as she either cannot, or is ashamed to answer. When he at length does return, she endeavours to let him see by her attentions, that she has

repented, though neither speak to each other a single word on the subject of what has passed. And as his children, if he has any, will on his return hang about him and soothe him with their caresses, he is, on their account, ready to forgive, or at least to say nothing unpleasant to their mother. She has, however, received by this a solemn warning, and must take care how she behaves in future, lest the next time her husband should stay away altogether and take another wife. It is very probable, that if at this time they had had no children, he would have left her, but then he would have taken his property with him at the same time.

On the return of an Indian from a journey, or long absence, he will on entering the house, say, "I am returned!" to which his wife will reply, "I rejoice!" and having cast his eyes around, he will enquire, whether all the children are well, when being answered in the affirmative, he replies, "I am glad!" which for the present is all the conversation that passes between them; nor does he relate any thing at this present time that occurred on his journey, but holds himself in readiness to partake of the nourishment which his wife is preparing for him. After a while, when the men of the village have assembled at his house, his wife, with the rest, hears his story at full length.

Marriages are proposed and concluded in different ways. The parents on both sides, having observed an attachment between two young persons, negotiate for them. This generally commences from the house where the bridegroom lives, whose mother is the negotiatrix for him, and begins her duties by taking a good leg of venison, or bear's meat, or something else of the same kind, to the house where the bride dwells, not forgetting to mention, that her son has killed it: in return for this the mother of the bride, if she otherwise approves of the match, which she well understands by the presents to be intended, will prepare a good dish of victuals, the pro-

dace of the labour of *woman*, such as beans, Indian corn, or the like, and then taking it to the house where the bridegroom lives, will say, "This is the produce of my daughter's field;" and she also prepared it. If afterwards the mothers of the parties are enabled to tell the good news to each other, that the young people have pronounced that which was sent them *very good*, the bargain is struck. It is as much as if the young man had said to the girl, "I am able to provide you at all times with meat to eat!" and she had replied, "and such good victuals from the field, you shall have from me!" From this time not only presents of this kind are continued on both sides, but articles of clothing are presented to the parents by each party, by way of return for what they have received, of which the young people always have a share. The friendship between the two families daily increasing, they do their domestic and field work jointly, and when the young people have agreed to live together, the parents supply them with necessaries, such as a kettle, dishes or bowls, and also what is required for the kitchen, and with axes, hoes, &c. to work in the field.

The men who have no parents to negotiate for them, or otherwise choose to manage the matter for themselves, have two simple ways of attaining their object. The first is: by stepping up to the woman whom they wish to marry, saying: "If you are willing I will take you as wife!" when if she answer in the affirmative, she either goes with him immediately, or meets him at an appointed time and place.

The other mode of celebrating marriage will appear from the following anecdote.

An aged Indian, who for many years had spent much of his time among the white people both in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, one day about the year 1770 observed, that the Indians had not only a much easier way of getting a wife than the whites, but were also more certain of getting a good one; "For," (said he in his bro-

ken English,) “White man court,—court,—may be one
 “whole year!—may be two year before he marry!—well!
 “—may be then got *very good* wife—but may be *not*!—
 “may be *very cross*!—Well now, suppose cross! scold
 “so soon as get awake in the morning! scold all day!
 “scold until sleep!—all one; he must keep *him*!* White
 “people have law forbidding throwing away wife, be
 “*he* ever so cross! must keep *him* always! Well!
 “how does Indian do?—Indian when he see industrious
 “Squaw, which he like, he go to *him*, place his two fore-
 “fingers close aside each other, make two look like one
 “—look Squaw in the face—see *him* smile—which is all
 “one *he* say, *Yes!* so he take *him* home—no danger *he*
 “be cross! no! no! Squaw know too well what Indian
 “do if *he* cross!—throw *him* away and take another!
 “Squaw love to eat meat! no husband! no meat! Squaw
 “do every thing to please husband! he do the same to
 “please Squaw! live happy!”

CHAPTER XVII.

RESPECT FOR THE AGED.

THERE is no nation in the world who pay greater respect to old age than the American Indians. From their infancy they are taught to be kind and attentive to aged persons, and never to let them suffer for want of necessaries or comforts. The parents spare no pains to impress upon the minds of their children the conviction

* The pronouns in the Indian language have no feminine gender.