



*Sketch of the Manners, Customs, Religion and Government of the Seneca  
Indians in 1800*

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AUTHOR:	Halliday Jackson (1771-1835)
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*To the Great Counsellor of the Thirteen Fires, the Speech of Cornplanter, Halftown and Great Tree, Chiefs and Counsellors of the Seneca Nation.*

“Father, The voice of the Seneca Nation speaks to you, the Great Counsellor in whose heart the wise men of all the Thirteen Fires have placed their wisdom. It may be very small in your ears, and we, therefore, entreat you to hearken with attention, for we are about to speak of things which are to us very great.

“When you gave us peace, we called you Father, because you promised to secure us in the possession of our land; do this, and so long as our land shall remain, that beloved name will live in the heart of every Seneca.

“Father, when you kindled your Thirteen Fires separately, the wise men who assembled at them, told us that you were all brothers—the children of one great Father, who regards also the red people as his children. They called us brothers, and invited us to his protection. They told us that he resided beyond the great waters, where the sun first rises—that he was a king, whose power no people could resist—and that his goodness was as bright as that sun. What they said went to our hearts. We accepted the invitation, and promised to obey him. What the Seneca nation promise, they faithfully perform—and when you refused obedience to that king, he commanded us to assist his beloved men in making you sober. We obeyed him—we did no more than yourselves had led us to promise. The men who claimed this promise, told us that you were children, and had no guns, that when they had shaken you, you would submit—we hearkened to them, and were deceived, until your army approached our towns. We were deceived; but your people, in teaching us to confide in that king, had helped to deceive us, and now we appeal to your heart—is all the blame ours?

“Father, When we saw that we had been deceived, and heard the invitation you gave us to draw nigh to the fire which you had kindled, and talk with you concerning peace, we made haste towards it. You then told us that we were in your hand, and that by closing it, you could crush us to nothing—and you demanded from us a great country as the price of that peace you had offered to us, as if our want of



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To the Great Counsellor of the Thirteen Fires, the Speech of the Corn-planter, Halftown and Great Tree, Chiefs and Counsellors of the Seneca Nation .

Father, The voice of all the Thirteen Fires have placed their wisdom. It may be very small in your ears, and we, therefore, entreat you to hearken with attention, for we are about to speak of things which are to us very great.

When you gave us peace, we called you Father, because you wished to secure us in the possession of our land; do this, and so long as our land shall remain, that beloved name will live in the heart of every Seneca.

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Father, When we saw that we had no invitation you gave us to draw nigh to the fire which you had kindled, and talk with you concerning peace, we made haste towards it. You then told us that we were in your hand, and that by closing it, you could crush us to nothing - and you demanded from us a great country as the price of that peace you had offered to us, as if our want of



strength had destroyed our rights. Our chiefs had felt your power, and were unable to contend against you, and they, therefore, gave up that country. What they agreed to, has bound our nation; but by this time your anger against us must be cooled, and although our strength has not increased, nor your power become less, we ask you to consider calmly—were the terms dictated to us by your commissioners reasonable and just?"

[After setting forth, in a plaintive strain, the many wrongs they had suffered, and the difficulties they had been led into by subsequent treaties with individuals, they go on, and say,] "Father, We could bear this confusion no longer, and determined to lift up our voice, so that you might hear us, and to claim that security in possession of our lands, which your commissioners so solemnly promised us, and we now entreat you to inquire into our complaints, and redress our wrongs." "We have already said how we came to join against you—we saw that we were wrong—we wished for peace—you demanded a great country to be given up to you as the price of peace; and we ought to have peace, and possession of the little land you then left us."

"Father, We will not conceal from you that the great God, and not man, has preserved the Cornplanter from the hands of his own nation, for they ask continually, 'where is the land on which our children, and their children after them, are to lay down upon?' 'You told us,' say they, 'that the line drawn from Pennsylvania to Lake Ontario, would mark it forever on the east, and the line running from Beaver Creek to Pennsylvania would mark it on the west; and we see that it has not been so—for first one, and then another, comes and takes it away, by order of that people who you tell us promised it to us.' He is silent, for he has nothing to say. When the sun goes down, he opens his heart before God, and earlier than the sun appears again upon the hills, he gives thanks for his protection during the night season—for he feels that when men become desperate by their danger, it is God only that can preserve him. He loves peace, and all that he had in store he has given to those who have been robbed by your people, lest they should plunder the innocent to repay themselves. The whole season which others have employed in providing for their families, he has spent in endeavouring to preserve peace, and at this moment his wife and children are lying on the ground in want of food—his heart is in pain for them—but he perceives that the Great Spirit will try his firmness in doing what is right.

"Father, All the land we have been speaking of, belonged to the Six Nations. No part of it ever belonged to the King of England, and he could not give it to you. The land we live on, our fathers received



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from God, and they transmitted it to us for our children, and we cannot part with it.

“Father, These are to us very great things—we know that you are very strong—and we have heard that you are wise—and we shall now wait to hear your answer to what we have said, that we may know that you are just.”

The foregoing speech was signed by Cornplanter, Half-town, and Great Tree, in the presence of Joseph Nicholson, interpreter, and Timothy Matlack.

President Washington answered them in a style adapted to the Indian mode of speech. In reply to their embarrassments respecting the sale of their lands, he says, “I am not uninformed that the Six Nations have been led into some difficulty with respect to the sale of their lands, since the peace—but I must inform you that these evils arose before the present government of the United States was established, when the separate states and individuals under their authority undertook to treat with the Indian tribes respecting the sale of their lands. But the case is now entirely altered—the general government, only, has the power to treat with the Indian nations, and any treaty formed and held without its authority, will not be binding.

“Here, then, is the security for the remainder of your lands—no state or person can purchase your lands, unless at some public treaty held under the authority of the United States. *The general government will never consent to your being defrauded, but will protect you in all your rights.*

“Hear well, and let it be heard by every person in your nation, that the President of the United States declares that the general government considers itself bound to protect you in all the land secured to you by the treaty at Fort Stanwix, the twenty-second of October, 1784, except such parts as you may since have fairly sold to persons properly authorized to purchase of you.

“Your great object seems to be the security of your remaining lands, and I have, therefore, upon this point, meant to be sufficiently strong and clear, that in future you cannot be defrauded of your lands—that you possess the right to sell, and the right of refusing to sell your lands—that, therefore, the sale of your lands in future, will depend entirely upon yourselves.”

In the conclusion of his speech, the President assures them “the United States will be true and faithful to their agreement.”



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*The Second Speech of Cornplanter, Half-town, and Big Tree.*

"Father, Your speech, written on the great paper, is to us like the first light of the morning to a sick man, whose pulse beats too strongly in his temples—he sees it, and rejoices, but is not cured.

"You have spoken plainly on the great point, that you will protect us in the land secured to us at Fort Stanwix, and that we have a right to sell, or refuse to sell—this is very good. But our nation complain that you compelled us at that treaty to give up too much of our lands—we confess that our nation is bound by what was there done, and acknowledge your power—we have now appealed to yourselves against that treaty, as made while you were too angry at us—and, therefore, unreasonable and unjust—to this you have given us no answer.

"Father, That treaty was not with a single state—it was the thirteen states. We should never have given all that land to one state—we know that it was before you had the great authority—and as you have more wisdom than the commissioners who forced us into that treaty, we expect you have more regard to justice, and will now, at our request, reconsider the treaty, and restore to us part of that land.

"Father, The land which lies between the line running south from Lake Erie to the boundary of Pennsylvania, as mentioned in the treaty of Fort Stanwix, and the eastern boundary of that land which you sold and the Senecas confirmed to Pennsylvania, is the land on which Half-town and all his people live, with other chiefs, who always were, and still are, dissatisfied with the treaty of Fort Stanwix. They grew out of this land, and their fathers grew out of it, and they cannot be persuaded to part with it. We therefore entreat you to restore us this little piece.

"Father, Look at the land which we gave to you at that treaty, and then cast your eyes upon what we now ask you to restore us, and you will see that what we now ask is a very little piece. By giving it back again you will satisfy the whole of our nation. The chiefs who signed that treaty will be in safety—and peace between your children and our children will continue so long as your land shall continue to join our's.

"Every man in our nation will then turn his eyes away from all the other land that we then gave up to you, and forget that our fathers ever said that it belonged to them.

"Father, We see that you ought to have the path at the carrying-place from Lake Erie to Niagara, as it was marked down at Fort Stanwix, and we are willing it should remain to be yours. And if you desire to reserve a passage through the Conewango, and through the



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Chautauque Lake, and land for a path from that Lake to Lake Erie, take it where you like best. Our nation will rejoice to see it an open path for you and your children, while the land and water remain: But let us pass along the same way, and continue to take the fish of these waters in common with you.

“Father, You say that you will appoint an agent to take care of us—let him come and take care of our trade, but we desire he may have nothing to do with our land; for the agents who have come among us, and pretended to take care of us, have always deceived us whenever we sold lands: both when the King and when the separate states have bargained with us: They have, by this means, occasioned many wars, and we are, therefore, unwilling to trust them again.

“Father, When we return home, we will call a great council, and consider well how lands may be hereafter sold by our nation, and when we have agreed upon it, we will send you notice thereof—but we desire that you will not depend upon your agent for information concerning lands; for after the abuses which we have received from such men, we will not trust them with any thing concerning lands.

“Father, We will not hear lies concerning you, and we desire you will not hear lies concerning us, and then we shall certainly live in peace with you.

“Father, Our nation has long looked round for a father, but they found none that would own them for his children, until you now tell us that your courts are open for us as to your own people. The joy that we feel on this great news so mixes with the sorrows that are past, that we cannot express our gladness, nor conceal the remembrance of our affliction—we will speak of it at another time.

“Father, We are ashamed that we have listened to L——n’s lies, or been influenced by threats of war from P——s, and would hide that whole transaction from the world and from ourselves, by quietly receiving what P——s promised to give us for the land he cheated us of. But as P——s will not pay us according to that fraudulent bargain, we must lay the whole proceeding before your court. When the evidence which we can produce is heard, we think it will appear that the whole bargain was founded upon lies which he placed one upon another—that the goods which he had charged to us, as part payment, were plundered from us—and that if P——s was not directly concerned in the theft, he knew of it at the time, and concealed it from us, and that the persons we confided in were bribed by him to deceive us in the bargain—and if these facts appear, your courts will not say that such bargains are just, but set the whole aside.

“Father, the blood that was spilt near Pine Creek, is covered, and we shall never look where it lies. We know that Pennsylvania will



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satisfy us for that which we speak to them, wherefore we speak to you. The chain of friendship will now, we hope, be made strong, as you desire it to be—we will hold it fast—our end of it shall never rust in our hands.

“Father, we told you what advice we gave to the people you are now at war with, and we now tell you that they have promised to come again next spring to our towns. We shall not wait for their coming, but set out very early in the season, and show them what you have done for us, which must convince them that you will do for them every thing that they ought to ask. We think they will hear us and forward our advice.

“Father, you gave us leave to speak our minds concerning the tilling of the ground—we ask you to teach us to plough and to grind corn, and supply us with broad axes, saws, augers, and other tools to assist us in building a saw mill, that we may make our houses more comfortable and more durable. That you will send smiths among us, and above all that you will teach our children to read and write, and our women to spin and weave. The manner of doing these things for us we leave to you who understand them, but we assure you that we will follow your advice as far as we are able.”

To this second speech the President made them a written reply, stating, among other things, that he could not disannul treaties made with the United States before his administration, and that, therefore, the boundaries marked by the treaty of Fort Stanwix must remain established. He assured them an agent should be appointed who would not be suffered to defraud them, or assist in defrauding them of their land; and concluded, by saying—

“You may, when you return from this city to your own country, mention to your nation my desire for their prosperity by teaching them the use of domestic animals, and the manner that the white people plough and raise so much corn, and if, upon consideration, it would be agreeable to the nation at large to learn these valuable arts, I will find such means of teaching them, at such places within their country as shall be agreed upon.”

“To the great counsellor of the Thirteen Fires. The speech of Cornplanter, Half-town, and Big Tree.

“Father, no Seneca ever goes from the fire of his friend until he has said to him *I am going*. We therefore tell you that we are now setting out for our own country.

“Father, we thank you from our hearts that we now know there is a country we may call our own, and on which we may lay down in peace. We see that there will be peace between your children and our children, and our hearts are very glad. We will persuade the Wyandots and other western nations to open their eyes, and look to-



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wards the bed which you have made for us, and to ask of you a bed for themselves and their children, that will not slide from under them.

"Father, we thank you for your presents to us, and rely on your promise to instruct us in raising corn as the white people do. The sooner you do this the better for us, and we thank you for the care which you have taken to prevent bad people from coming to trade among us. If any come without your license, we will turn them back, and we hope our nation will determine to spill all the rum that shall hereafter be brought to our towns.

"Father, you have not asked of us any surety for peace on our part, but we have agreed to send nine Seneca boys to be under your care for education—tell us at what time you will receive them, and they shall be sent at that time. This will assure you that we are indeed at peace with you, and determined to continue so. If you can teach them to be wise and good men, we will take care that our nation shall be willing to be instructed by them.

Signed in the presence of Joseph Nicholson, interpreter.

Attest,                    THOMAS PROCTOR,  
TIMOTHY MATLACK.

*Philadelphia, February 7th, 1791.*

The foregoing extracts may serve to show the strong point of view in which the faith of the United States was pledged to protect the Indians in their rightful possessions. And this interview with the President opened the way for the introduction of civilized habits among the Seneca nation of Indians, subsequently commenced and prosecuted by the society of Friends. Some account of their proceedings may hereafter be given, in which the writer of this was for many years actively engaged. It is, in the first place, his design to give a sketch of *their manners and customs*, at the time these operations were commenced—being the result of observation, during his residence and frequent visits among the Seneca nation, as well as from the most authentic information collected from others well acquainted with their habits and manners.

This sketch, written many years ago, will consist in a brief view of their persons, dress, houses, provisions—hardships imposed upon the females, economy, intercourse with one another, treatment of their children, employment of the men—hunting, their belief in the Great Spirit, opinion of the evil spirit, place of happiness after death, place of punishment, religious ceremonies, sacrifices, mourning for the dead, superstitious notions, banquets, marriages, government, mode of appointing chiefs, punishments, hieroglyphics, idea of the globe, &c.

HALLIDAY JACKSON.



## Transcription

wards the bed which you have made ytf for us, and to ask of you a bed for themselves and their children, ytf that will not slide from under them. ytf Father, we thank you for your promise to instruct us in raising corn as the white people do. Theytf sooner you do this the better for us, and we thank you for the care ytf which you have taken to prevent bad people from coming to trade ytf among us. If any come without your license, we will turn them back, ytf and we hope our nation will determine to spill all the rum that ytf shall hereafter be brought to our towns. ytf Father, you have not asked of us any surety for peace on our part, ytf but we have agreed to send nine Seneca ytf boys to be under your care for education - tell us at what time you ytf will receive them, and they shall be sent at that time. This will ytf assure you that we are indeed at peace with you, and determined to ytf continue so. If you can teach them to be wise and good men, we will ytf take care that our nation shall be willing to be instructed by ytf them. ytf Signed in the presence of Joseph ytf Nicholson, interpreter. Attest, ytf Thomas Proctor, ytf Timothy Matlack. ytf ytf Philadelphia, February 7 in which ytf the faith of the United States was pledged to protect the Indians in their ytf rightful possessions. And this interview with the President opened the way ytf for the introduction of civilized habits among the ytf Seneca nation of Indians, subsequently commenced ytf and prosecuted by the society of Friends. Some account of their proceedings ytf may hereafter be given, in which the writer of this was for many years ytf actively engaged. It is, in the first place, his design to give a sketch of ytf their manners and customs, at the time these operations were commenced ytf - being the result of observation, during his residence and frequent ytf visits among the Seneca nation, as well as ytf from the most authentic information collected from other well acquainted ytf with their habits and manners. ytf This sketch, written many years ago, will consist in a brief view of their ytf persons, dress, houses, provisions - hardships imposed upon the females, ytf economy, intercourse with one another, treatment of their children, ytf employment of the men - hunting, their belief in the Great Spirit, opinion ytf of the evil spirit, place of happiness after death, place of punishment, ytf religious ceremonies, sacrifices, mourning for the dead, superstitious ytf notions, banquets, marriages, government, mode of appointing chiefs, ytf punishments, hieroglyphics, idea of the globe, &c. ytf ytf ytf



*Manners and Customs of the Seneca Nation of Indians, in  
the year 1800.*

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IN their persons, the Senecas are generally of a moderate stature and well proportioned, though instances of dwarfishness and deformity are sometimes to be seen among them. Their complexion is of a copper colour, and the hair black—that of the men being generally cut close, excepting a small tuft on the crown of the head, which is suffered to grow long, and is tied in a small roll on the top, on which they frequently wear a silver tube, about three inches in length. Some, also, let small locks grow obliquely projecting over their shoulders. They very generally extract their beards by means of a spiral spring ring made of wire, about the common knitting needle size, and about two inches in length; this being applied to the face, and pressed between the thumb and finger, forms a kind of pincers, and takes so fast hold of the beard as readily to extract it. This is also frequently made use of to extract the hair from the head instead of cutting, and sometimes the operation is performed between their thumb and the blunt edge of a knife.

Their eyes are black, keen, and penetrating—their countenance open and engaging in general, and a great object of their vanity is, to give every possible decoration to their persons, by painting their faces a variety of colours, among which vermilion and charcoal are their favourites.

They most generally use the red, but streaks of black are occasionally intermixed. Black mostly denotes trouble; but the red, though it makes them look fierce, as in time of disturbance, is expressive of war—so it is also used to denote cheerfulness, and sometimes to hide the true expression of the countenance—and in this way, when rubbed round the eye, it has a wonderful effect.

Their dress is simple and commodious. It consists of tight leggings reaching above the knee, made of cloth or flannel—a strip of cloth about a foot wide and three or four feet long, according to the size of the person, is drawn inwards at each end, and hangs down behind and before, over a belt tied round the waist for that purpose—the outward ends of this are frequently ornamented with silver brooches. A close vest or shirt reaching somewhat below the waist, made of linen or calico, and in some instances a short waistcoat, with an overcoat of cloth, or blanketing, (which they call match-coat,) clumsily made, and the



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addition of moccasins on their feet, and a cap on their head, mostly complete their apparel. The materials of their dress, however, vary according to the season. In warm weather they are very thinly clad, and in the winter they generally wrap their blanket round them, in addition to their other clothing. At times, their head dress is curiously ornamented with large feathers, and the tails of wild animals, projecting from their ears sideways, some erect, and others flowing behind them. These habiliments are put on, however, as their caprice suggests, and are generally worn at their feasts and sacrifices, or on expeditions to distant parts, when they make the most antic appearance.

The female dress is formed of much the same materials as that of the other sex, but of somewhat different make and arrangement. They wear moccasins on their feet, and their leggings are fastened below the knee. An open garment descending about half down the leg, is fastened round them by a belt at the waist, and the upper part turned downwards, reaching near to the knee, which part is often covered with ribands or embellished with silver brooches, with a considerable degree of skill and taste.

They wear a short frock or vest, reaching to the waist, flowing loose about them, and when their business will admit, their blanket is spread over the whole, and serves them both night and day. Divers of their garments are fancifully fringed and ornamented with needle work, set in with beads and porcupine quills, variegated and disposed with much skill and ingenuity. Their hair is left to grow at full length, generally falls back, and is tied up in a knot behind, care being taken to apply to it plentifully of the fat of the bear. Their head-dress consists principally of a simple cap, or hood, made of cloth, or old blanket-ing, secured together, at one end, and flowing round their neck and shoulders; but these are seldom worn by the females, except in cold weather.

Their houses are of different dimensions, from ten to thirty feet in length, but narrow in proportion. They are built of poles, or small logs, being about six feet to the square of the eve, and covered with a very steep roof of bark, which they take off the tree in very broad pieces, five or six feet long, mostly chestnut, hemlock, or cucumber. They generally take it from the tree, shave the outside off, and lay it in a horizontal pile to press, some time before they use it.

The rafters are made of round poles, the lower end dovetailed in the top log—tied together at the top, and crossed again at smaller distances by other poles, on which are laid the bark, which is tied to the poles with the inside rind of hickory or other strong bark.

Two courses thus laid on, generally cover one side of the house, and the ridge of the roof is made tight by laying broad pieces lengthways,



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and tying them down as aforesaid. A roof of good bark, thus put on, will stand water proof for several years, and the labour of renewing it is not very considerable in a country where timber abounds. In a long house, the logs are joined together at the ends by means of a gutter post, which stands perpendicular about midway on each side of the building, and are neatly notched down at the corners. Some who wish to live more secure from the cold winds, stop the intermediate spaces with moss. The door is almost invariably at one end of the house, the logs being all cut off except the top and bottom ones, and fitted into gutter posts, which serve for door cheeks. Two births or shelvings are made on each side of the house, the lower one about one foot from the ground, on which they lodge, and the other about five feet high, on which they throw their household furniture, provisions, &c. The fire is built in the centre of the house, and a hole left in the roof directly over it to vent the smoke. There are girders supported by upright timbers, on which they hang up their corn to dry; a cross-piece of timber again rests on these, from which withs and wooden hooks are suspended to hang their kettles on, over the fire, wherein they cook their provisions.

Some had wigwams,\* the walls as well as roofs of which were constructed of bark, supported by small poles stuck in the ground, to which the bark was fastened—the inside of the house much on the same construction as the former. These were not very common in their villages, but more generally occupied as a temporary residence, when in the woods making sugar, or as a hunting encampment.

The third month, is generally their season for making sugar, when whole families retire into the woods contiguous to a grove of sugar maple, the sap of which they extract, by making an incision into the trunk near the ground, and convey it, by means of a small tube, into troughs set for the purpose. This is collected and taken to the camp, where it is boiled in large kettles till reduced to sugar, and when cleanliness is observed in the operation, they will make this valuable article of an excellent flavour and quality. The sap runs most plentifully in a clear sunshine, after a cold frosty night—but a damp wind from the southward checks the flowing of the sap immediately.

At this season the Indians remain several weeks in the woods, and the men assist the women in the labour of making sugar, besides attending to their hunting, to procure supplies of meat. They also trap those amphibious and other animals, which furnish furs, and especially the beaver, the meat of which they esteem a luxury.

\* The Delaware word for house.



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The females, who are subject, (as amongst other uncivilized nations) to almost every kind of domestic drudgery, are industrious in the culture of Indian corn, beans, squashes, melons, potatoes, and many other vegetables. And although each family have their separate piece of ground to cultivate with the hoe, and hold the fruit of their industry as distinct property, yet they frequently join in large companies to assist each other, on which occasions they are remarkably loquacious and lively, as also expert in using the hoe, each patiently assisting her neighbour, till her own turn comes in rotation. Thus they enjoy a kind of convivial intercourse, which greatly tends to ameliorate the weight of labour assigned them, and in many instances no doubt, affords them a satisfaction equal to, if not surpassing that enjoyed by many of the white females in their most social entertainments.

The vegetables which they raise with the hoe, with some fish caught in the river, generally compose a great part of their provision in the summer season. Venison was not at all times to be procured plentifully, and even when obtained, by hunting, they had no way of preserving it, in the warm weather, except by drying it over the fire, into what they call *jerk*. This is sometimes done in the woods, at their hunting camps—by means of a kind of rack made of small sticks, over the fire, or by sharpening the sticks at both ends and setting them in the ground, near the fire, with the meat stuck on the upper end. Salt at this time was a scarce article among them, and not to be procured but at an extravagant price, yet it is an article of which they are very fond, and what little they were enabled to obtain was frequently carried with them, carefully tied up in one corner of their clothes, and used sparingly. Their venison was often eaten without salt, bread, or vegetables; and as they are not delicate in their palate, they often feast, apparently with a relish, on meat highly tainted. They were not observed to be early risers in the morning; they seldom eat more than two meals a day, and those morning and evening. Their meals principally consist of soups, made of squashes, beans, hominy, and other vegetables; also of meat cut in small pieces, when it can be procured. This dish is then served up in wooden bowls, and supped with wooden ladles; the eldest of the male part of the family being generally served first, and thus in rotation, to the youngest—afterwards the females partake in a similar manner. On some extraordinary occasions, they sweeten their soups with sugar. This article they are very fond of; and as they make it in cakes of near a pound weight, they frequently carry it with them, and eat it like cheese, with bread, or sweeten water to drink.

When their new corn becomes fit for use, which is generally in the ninth-month, they feast plentifully on it, sometimes boiling it, as usual among white people, and also make soup or dumplings of it, while in a



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milky state. The process of the latter is, to cut it off the cob and tie it up in small cakes, in the corn husks, mixed with whortleberries or dried blackberries, and boiled like a pudding. This when seasoned with a little salt, makes a palatable food, and with the addition of some bear's fat, is to them a luxury.

Their bread is made of corn meal, into which they put beans, mix it up with hot water, and bake it in the embers. They also parch their corn, pound it fine, and mix sugar with it. This is a delicacy even with white people, and frequently forms a part of the Indian's travelling provisions; wanting no other preparation for eating, than wetting it with water. They raise a kind of small round squash, which they boil, or roast in the embers, and which, in taste, resembles a sweet potato; and these they not only use in the autumn, but preserve nearly through the winter. In times of scarcity, they are often reduced to the necessity of gathering wild roots and herbs, on which they subsist. In short, a great variety, prepared in the most simple manner, composed their provisions. Almost every kind of fowl, fish, and flesh are eaten by them; even some amphibious animals—and the beaver, especially—as before stated, was esteemed a luxury.

Having no mills in their country, the women reduced their corn to meal, by pounding it in wooden mortars, and sifting it in a sieve made of wooden splints. The pounders were made of hard wood, and of different weights, according to the size and strength of the woman; and frequently three of them would be engaged in one block at the same time, and regulate their strokes in alternation.

The females also cut their firewood and carry it home on their backs; and about some of their ancient villages, oftentimes from a quarter to a half mile distance. This being an arduous part of the task assigned them, they frequently join in large companies to assist each other; and to those who have not been eye-witnesses, it might appear incredible to relate the size and weight of the burthens they carry tied up in a belt, which bears on the forehead; the wood being suspended across the back, as the female inclines forward. The young girls are not exempted from this service, but carry small burthens in proportion to their strength; and these female labourers knowing the task assigned them, are economical in procuring their wood in the summer, or early in the fall; having it split up small, carried home, and piled round the house, or often under a shed made for the purpose. This would be thought insupportable, by the females of some, if not all civilized nations; but custom and necessity have made it quite familiar to these sprightly inhabitants of the wilderness.

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neous production of their country, suitable for the support of human life, and lay up against times of scarcity, which sometimes occur, and more frequently in the fore part of summer. For though many of them raise a competence of corn, to serve, with frugality, the year round, yet others fall short—using their supply so liberally, it is exhausted before the new corn is fit for use; still trusting to the hazard of procuring food from their native forests.

When an Indian entered the house of his friend, it was common to set before him such provisions as were cooked, and if while he was eating, several of his associates came in, he divided it in equal parts amongst them; reserving his own proportion. When he is about to leave his friend, he tells him he is going, which amounts to farewell; but if any circumstance takes place which has given umbrage, he withdraws, and says nothing. This is clear evidence that he is offended.

They appear to be naturally as well calculated for social and rational enjoyment, as any people.—They frequently visit each other in their houses, and spend much of their time in friendly intercourse.

They are also mild and hospitable, not only among themselves, but to strangers, and good natured in the extreme, except when their natures are perverted by the inflammatory influence of spirituous liquors. In their social interviews, as well as public councils, they are careful not to interrupt one another in conversation, and generally make short speeches. This truly laudable mark of good manners, enables them to transact all their public business with decorum and regularity, and more strongly impresses on their mind and memory, the result of their deliberations. Probably it is from this circumstance that they are enabled, without the aid of literature, to retain in their memory, and transmit their transactions from one generation to another; thus one of their chiefs, speaking in public councils, will relate with precision, circumstances that have taken place among their ancestors for several generations past.

Although they appear to possess tender feelings for their children, they inure them to hardships, while in an infant state, by frequently immersing them in cold water. Being indulged in most of their wishes, as they grow up, liberty, in its fullest extent, becomes their ruling passion. They are seldom chastened with blows, or treated with restraint or correction. Their faults are mostly left for their own reason to correct when they are grown up—which faults, they say, cannot be very great, before reason arrives at some degree of maturity. If, however, they prove too obstinate, they sometimes plunge them in the river; and if one dip is not sufficient to conquer or quiet them, it is repeated, till the end is effected. As the child gets a little older, they will sometimes talk to it a long while, endeavouring to impress on its mind what it



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neous production of their country, ytf suitable for the support of human life, and lay up against times of ytf scarcity, which sometimes occur, and more frequently in the fore part of ytf summer. For though many of them raise a competence of corn, to serve, with ytf frugality, the year round, yet others fall short - using their supply so ytf liberally, it is exhausted before the new corn is fit for use; still ytf trusting to the hazard of procuring food from their native forests. ytf When an Indian entered the house of his friend, it was common to set before ytf him such provisions as were cooked, and if while he was eating, several of ytf his associates came in, he divided it in equal parts amongst them; ytf reserving his own proportion. When he is about to leave his friend, he ytf tells him he is going, which amounts to farewell; but if any circumstance ytf takes place which has given umbrage, he withdraws, and says nothing. This ytf is clear evidence that he is offended. ytf They appear to be naturally as well calculated for ytf enjoyment, as any people. --They frequently visit each other in their ytf houses, and spend much of their time in friendly intercourse. ytf They are also mild and hospitable, not only to ytf strangers, and good natured in the extreme, except when their nature are ytf perverted by the inflammatory influence of spirituous liquors. In their ytf social interviews, as well as public council, they are careful not to ytf interrupt one another in conversation, and generally make short speeches. ytf This truly laudable mark of good manners, enables them to transact all ytf their public business with decorum and regularity, and more strongly ytf impresses on their mind and memory, the result of their deliberations. ytf Probably it is from this circumstance that they are enabled, without the ytf aid of literature, to retain in their memory, and transmit their ytf transactions from one generation to another; thus one of their chiefs, ytf speaking in public council, will relate with precision, circumstances ytf that have taken place among their ancestors for several generations ytf past. ytf Although they appear to possess tender feelings for their children, they ytf inure them to hardships, while in an infant state, by frequently immersing ytf them in cold water. Being indulged in most of their wishes, as they grow ytf up, liberty, in its fullest extent, becomes their ruling passion. They are ytf seldom chastened with blows, or treated with restraint or correction. Their ytf faults are mostly left for their own reason to correct when they are grown ytf up - which faults, they say, cannot be very great, before reason arrives at ytf some degree of maturity. If, however, they prove too obstinate, they ytf sometimes plunge them in the river; and if one dip is not sufficient to ytf conquer or quiet them, it is repeated, till the end is effected. As they ytf child gets a little older, they will sometimes talk to it a long while, ytf endeavouring to impress on its mind what it ytf



ought to do, and what to leave undone. At other times, they ridicule their children for doing wrong, and tell them they are not wise in doing so.

And one remarkable trait in the character of the children, is, that they are generally good humoured among themselves, and children of the same family show strong attachments to each other, and are less liable to quarrel in their youthful days than is generally the case with white children.

The father, although he assumes little command over his sons, is nevertheless anxious to instruct them in the necessary qualifications for hunting, &c. while the mothers are equally attentive to their daughters, in teaching them every thing that is considered necessary to their character and mode of living.

On taking a view of their situation, one would naturally suppose the life of these women was an uninterrupted scene of toil and pain, which, indeed, in a great measure, it really is; for, besides attending to the usual labours of the field, and every culinary service, the duties of maternal care are added, and require a considerable part of their attention—the men assuming very little of the parental trust.

Providence seems, in a remarkable manner, to have furnished these females with strength and fortitude adequate to their situation; for, at those times when the females of civilized nations require the most tender care and solicitude, these hardy daughters of the forest have little or no respite from their usual labours.

Their children are frequently born in the woods, where the woman, accompanied by an elderly female, retires on the occasion, and if in cold weather a fire is made. The babe is immediately wrapt in a blanket, and generally, in a few hours, the mother returns with it to her own habitation, and engages in her usual employment, without any apparent injury to her health, or constitution.

In the nursing of their children, a very considerable degree of ingenuity is manifested; and for convenience of carrying, as also to keep the limbs of the young child straight, they confine it with its back to a board, made for the purpose; and often fancifully decorated with various trinkets, and embroidery. This board is about two feet and a half in length, and one in breadth, with a little hoop in front, to protect the head and face of the child, from which also they suspend a curtain to cover it from flies or cold. At the bottom is a small foot-board, on which the child is placed in an erect posture, with its hands down its sides. It is then swathed with a bandage of cloth, from the feet to the chin, so tight as to be unable to disengage itself. If the weather is cold, the skin of some animal, with soft fur on it, is put next to it; and if a female, a small block is placed between the heels to give the toes an



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inclination inwards, but if a male, they endeavour to keep the feet in a direction straight forward. One consequence of this is, that the track of the different sexes may easily be distinguished. In this vehicle, their children are carried about at pleasure, suspended down the back by a belt, which comes round the forehead of the mother. When taken to the woods, or fields, they are occasionally set up against trees or stumps, while the mother is employed in her customary labours. Sometimes they are suspended by the four corners to poles laid horizontally on forks stuck in the ground. In this position they are drawn backwards and forwards, a little similar to rocking in a cradle, and on all occasions they are careful to prevent their children, as much as may be, from crying. They are loosened from the board a few times in the day; but being so accustomed to this confinement, and so perfectly at ease in it, they become uneasy when taken out, and their tranquillity is restored when replaced. This mode of confinement is continued about nine months, and is not only advantageous in the nursery, but also in carrying them with more ease and security.

The chief employment of the men was hunting and fishing, making canoes, building their houses, dressing deer skins, making bowls, &c. in all which they were ingenious, considering the tools they had to work with. In their hunting excursions, they generally take their wives and families with them, and remain several weeks in the woods, sometimes twenty, forty, or even one hundred miles from their villages, and generally up or down a river, or some large stream of water, where they can go in canoes. And their household furniture being mostly portable, they carry as much with them as answers their purpose during their hunting tour. On getting to the place they have chosen for a hunting ground, they erect a temporary shed, generally so situated as to command an extensive view of the river, or some smaller stream, where they may have a favourable opportunity of seeing the deer, or other wild animals pass and repass, and thus it frequently happens, that they have an opportunity of shooting them from the door of their cabin.

The man sets out in the morning, generally taking his course along some stream of water, making, as he travels on, a kind of a way mark, by once in a while breaking down a bush; and in this way traverses the country for many miles in the course of the day, exploring the haunts of the deer or elk, as these animals resort to certain places called *deer licks*, with which the country abounds, where the water issuing from them is somewhat impregnated with salt. When the huntsman kills a deer, or other animal, he takes off the skin, which he generally carries with him; and, dividing the carcass in quarters, he hangs it up in a tree, and then makes his way to the path along the water course, breaking down the bushes from the deer, till he reaches it,



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where he scrapes with his feet in the leaves or snow, or otherwise in case of snow falling to cover his marks on the ground; he cuts down a bush, and sharpening a stick, sets it in a position pointing in a direct line to the deer he has killed; this furnishes a mark for his wife to find the game he has killed, whose business it is to carry it home to their camp. He then pursues his hunting again, and if he kills several deer in the course of the day, he marks the way from each in the same manner to the main path by the water; and in the evening returns to his cabin tired with his day's toil, where his wife furnishes him with a supper of such as she has to prepare. He then relates the success that has attended him through the day, regales himself with the fumes of tobacco, and retires to rest on a deer skin, in his native dignity, as aboriginal lord of the soil. If too late in the evening when he returns, his wife goes off next morning, directed by his marks where to find the deer he has killed, and brings them home on her back, one at a time, often from a great distance; but in the winter time, when they have great success in hunting, they leave much of the flesh in the woods, which is devoured by wolves, or other animals of prey.

They sometimes watch the deer licks in the night season, where those animals more frequently resort than they do in the day time, and sometimes in great numbers.

The huntsman takes his station in the evening at a proper distance, and kindles a small fire, which he is careful to conceal, until he hears some deer in the lick, and then having some torches, or dry wood, presently makes the light shine round about, by which he can discover his prey, and the poor animals will stand gazing at the light, while he discharges his gun at them. In this manner, they frequently kill several deer in a night.

As the snow falls deep in their country, frequently from one to three feet, it renders travelling difficult in the winter. The Indians, therefore, have recourse to snow shoes, on which they can travel with much facility, and sometimes catch the deer by running them down, without either dog or gun.

These snow shoes are made of a tough piece of wood curved before, and somewhat of an oval form, making a span of about two feet long, and perhaps one foot wide, in the middle. Two straight braces cross this again at proper distances to support the foot, and the intermediate spaces are laced with great neatness, with thongs of deer or elk skin. They vary in size according to the person wearing them. On these, the huntsman wanders over mountain, hill, and dale, in pursuit of the wild animals of the wood, and should he get benighted at too great a distance to reach his cabin, and has killed any deer, he strikes up a fire in the woods, and roasts a ham or shoulder of venison on a sharp stick



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stuck in the ground before it; beginning to eat as soon as one side is done, and sometimes continuing to eat, as his venison cooks, until he is satisfied or the whole is consumed. It is said that some of the hunters when very hungry, will eat a ham of venison without much difficulty. This, in part, may be accounted for, from their sometimes starving a long time—for in general they are moderate eaters.

*Religious Ceremonies, Government, &c.*

THE Indians believe in one all-wise, Supreme Being, who governs the universe; and that they will be made happy or miserable in a future state, according as their conduct pleases or displeases him, in this state of existence. This all-wise being they call *How-wa-neeo*, or Great Spirit, and believe him to be the creator of all good things, the author of happiness, and the rewarder of all good actions, both in this world and in the next.

They believe, also, that there is an evil spirit, which they call *Nish-shee-o-nee*, who influences to bad actions, and who is the creator of all that is bad—such as venomous serpents, wolves, and all warlike beasts, poisonous weeds, bad thoughts and deeds, and every thing that is productive of unhappiness, both in man and on the earth.

They believe there is a place of happiness called in their language *Hight-ca-a-nongay*, and that when they die, if their conduct has been orderly, and pleasing to the Great Spirit in this world, they are admitted into this happy region, among the spirits of good men and women, where the Great Spirit is their comforter and chief ruler—and that he there hangs about their necks a string of implements for hunting, and for providing themselves a comfortable living, and that they are sent to hunt in a warm country, where game is plenty, and the land fertile for corn, beans, and other vegetables.

Twice in the year, arrayed in their best clothing, and decked with ornaments, they assemble at the town where their Chief lives, in order to render thanks to the Great Spirit for the favours which he hath conferred upon them. Their stated periods for these ceremonies are in the beginning of autumn, when their new corn, beans, squashes, potatoes, &c. are fit for use, and again about the middle of winter, when they generally return to their villages with the produce of their hunting expeditions.

After they are generally collected, both men and women, with the children, an examination takes place, whether any uneasiness or dissatisfaction exists among them, and whether any have committed offences or evil acts. Of these it is often the case that the offender makes confession, the design of which is, that all wrong things may be done away,



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and reconciliation take place, where any differences have occurred, and a promise on the part of the aggressor to try to do better for the future; which done, the council then assembled forgive them.

They then institute a dance round or near a wooden image, which stands a little distance from the Chief's door, being formed of a huge block of wood into the similitude of a man, and artfully painted; embellished with skins, handkerchiefs, fine ribands, and feathers of a variety of colours. Both sexes join promiscuously in the dance—two men being seated near the feet of the image, make music by pounding on a skin drawn over the mouth of a kettle, or some other vessel, the sound of which has some resemblance to that of a drum. As they move round in a circle, each one has a spoon, ladle, or some other instrument in the left hand, and frequently give a frightful halloo or scream. The men are all naked from the waist up, and their bodies painted a variety of hues. They have also various kinds of trinkets suspended from their ears and noses, and abundance of ornaments, such as belts and deer's hoofs strung like beads, fastened about their legs, which make a great rattle during the process of the dance.

After a day spent at this general rendezvous, they divide into smaller companies, men and women apart, and keep up the dance in each house in the town. These dancing companies are preceded by two men appointed for the purpose, who are dressed in the most frightful manner imaginable, being covered with bear skins, and a bag of ashes tied round their middle, behind them, with a hole to suffer the ashes to fly about as they move. Their faces are covered with a large painted mask, having a high mane on the crown, made of long coarse horse hair standing almost erect, and large eyes encircled with a flame-coloured ring. The mouth is open, and shows their own teeth, with which they grin in a terrific manner, and their hands are blackened so as to leave the marks on every person they lay them on. They carry the shell of a mud tortoise, which has been dried for the purpose, with a stick thrust through it, which stretches the neck and large head to their full extent, and inside of the shell are a quantity of pebbles, with which they make a wonderful rattle.

These men go from house to house, and rub this shell on the sides and up and down the door posts. They also frequently enter into the house, but say nothing, nor do any injury. As they travel about, if they meet with any person, male or female, in their way, they pursue them—those who turn and receive them in a friendly way, they shake hands with, but say nothing—but it is rather expected that many should run as if terrified; these are pursued, and if overtaken before they get into a house, are laid hold of, and blackened with their hands,



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but no other injury is offered, and, except a frightful yelling noise, nothing is spoken.

The design of these frightful representations is, to personify and imitate the bad spirit, and to remind the Indians of the necessity to amend their ways, and avoid all wrong things.

After this concert of heathenish superstition has continued for several days, they assemble again round the wooden image\* near the council house, and sacrifice a dog, first decorating him with strings of wampum, fine ribands, and some paintings; and after hanging him on the image, burn him to ashes, on a fire kindled near him for the purpose. On some extraordinary occasions, they eat the flesh of the dog, and a white dog is always preferred, as being deemed a more acceptable offering.

While the dog is consuming, they dance round the fire, making a dreadful yelling and whooping, and during the process of the dance, about one pound of tobacco, of a particular kind, rubbed fine, which they consider as peculiarly agreeable to the Great Spirit, is thrown on the fire, in the smoke whereof, their aspirations, as they suppose, ascending, they believe are heard by the Great Spirit, and are offered, together with their dancing, under a profession of pleasing him.

During this ascension of the smoke, a Chief whom they call their minister, and who appears to have the command and superintendence of this ceremony, addresses the Great Spirit in a speech, the purport of which is an acknowledgment for favours received, thanks for preservation in times past, and imploring his continued care and protection.

\* About the year 1802 this image, decaying at the ground, fell down. This circumstance occasioned very considerable agitation among them, to know in what manner to dispose of it, without giving offence to the Great Spirit; as they considered it to be his representative. Some were for taking it into the woods, and leaving plenty of provisions beside it. Others were for erecting another in its stead, and some were for discarding such a representation entirely.

A son of Cornplanter, the Chief, who had got his ideas a little expanded by an education among white people, reasoned with them on the subject, and told them that it had grown up in the woods like other trees of the forest; that they had cut it down, and made it into the form of a man, but it was still nothing but a block of wood, and had no power or sense, and, therefore, could not represent the Great Spirit, as they imagined; and if they would give it up to him, he would dispose of it. To this they reluctantly consented, and on conditions only, that he would take all the responsibility of any harm happening the nation in consequence thereof. Accordingly he tumbled it into the river, and let it swim down, the Indians carefully viewing the process, to see whether any evil would befall him.

Some time after, several of them passing along the river, discovered it lodged on an island, about eleven miles below its former station, at which they appeared struck with astonishment, and considerably alarmed, but let it remain as they found it.



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but no other injury is offered, and, except a frightful yelling noise, nothing is spoken. The design of these frightful representations is, to personify and imitate the bad spirit, and to remind the Indians of the necessity to amend their ways, and avoid all wrong things. After this concert of heathenish superstition has continued for several days, they assemble again round the wooden image\* near the council house, and sacrifice a dog, first decorating him with strings of wampum, fine ribands, and some paintings; and after hanging him on the image, burn him to ashes, on a fire kindled near him for the purpose. On some extraordinary occasions, they eat the flesh of the dog, and a white dog is always preferred, as being deemed a more acceptable offering. While the dog is consuming, they dance round the fire, making a dreadfully yelling and whooping, and during the process of the dance, about one pound of tobacco, of a particular kind, rubbed fine, which they consider peculiarly agreeable to the Great Spirit, is thrown on the fire, in the smoke whereof, their aspirations, as they suppose, ascending, they believe are heard by the Great Spirit, and are offered, together with their dancing, under a profession of pleasing him. During this ascension of the smoke, a Chief, and who appears to have the command and superintendence of this ceremony, addresses the Great Spirit in a speech, the purport of which is any acknowledgment for favours received, thanks for preservation in times past, and imploring his continued care and protection. \*About the year 1802 this image, stance occasioned very considerable agitation among them, to know in what manner to dispose of it, without giving offence to the Great Spirit; as they considered it to be his representative. Some were for taking it into the woods, and leaving plenty of provisions beside it. Others were for erecting another in its stead, and some were for discarding such a representation entirely. A son of Cornplanter, the Chief, who had got his ideas a little expanded among white people, reasoned with them on the subject, and told them that it had grown up in the woods like other trees of the forest; that they had cut it down, and made it into the form of a man, but it was still nothing but a block of wood, and had no power or sense, and, therefore, could not represent the Great Spirit, as they imagined; and if they would give it up to him, he would dispose of it. To this they reluctantly consented, and on conditions only, that he would take all the responsibility of any harm happening the nation in consequence thereof. Accordingly he tumbled it into the river, and let it swim down, the Indians carefully viewing the process, to see whether any evil would befall him. Some time after, several of them passing along the river, discovered it on an island, about eleven miles below its former station, which they appeared struck with astonishment, and considerably alarmed, but let it remain as they found it.



He then addresses the people, advising them how they ought to conduct, and pointing out some of the prominent evils which they ought to avoid; one of the greatest of these is stealing, and another is, for the husband to desert and separate himself from his wife during pregnancy; but taking the life of another is not considered a crime so capital, as they are left at liberty to revenge it, by taking the life of the murderer. This may be done with impunity by the nearest relative of the deceased, and they then consider the cries of blood to be done away. Preparatory to these sacrifices, they are careful to procure a sufficiency of provisions.

This is done by deputing a certain number of their warriors to hunt, who encircle a large space of hunting ground, and all the game taken thereon is devoted to this feast. Previously to that which was held in the summer of 1799, thirty men were sent out, who returned the day following with seventeen deer. Great attention is paid to the cooking, and certain places are appointed where the entertainment shall be given. Spirituous liquors are not allowed on these occasions, although near the conclusion there are instances, at times, of some of them getting intoxicated.

Their stated time, according to ancient custom, for holding these sacrifices, is four days at a time, twice in the year; but they frequently continue their feasting and dancing at intervals and by companies, for eight or ten days; and, after the last day being spent in playing at games of chance, they generally conclude by the firing of guns.

Their reason for performing these ceremonious rites, at these two seasons of the year, they say, is to return thanks to the Great Spirit, for sending them plenty of bread and meat—that it was the way their forefathers had taught them, and they knew of no better; and although the feast is conducted with considerable noise, and apparent confusion, it is also attended at intervals with much solemnity, and on the part of many of them, purely on a religious ground, and from sincere and good motives. But, at the same time, they are willing to acknowledge that their worship was not performed with so much solemnity as their forefathers practised.

Besides their public devotional feasts and sacrifices, the Indians exercise a kind of family worship, at times, when they are sitting together, particularly in the evening. If one of the heads of the family feels an impulse to address the Great Spirit, he, or she, yields to it with an audible voice, and this, among the more serious class, is frequently performed, though not on any stated days or times. They are sometimes exercised in this way when their friends are with them, and the subject of aspiration is a thanksgiving for the preservation of their particular family or tribe, and for supplying the varied necessities and comforts



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of life, desiring their continuance; an evidence, this, that among all their superstition and ignorance, they are not destitute of the divine principle operating within them, and raising in their minds a sense of their dependent state, the obligations they are under to their great preserver and benefactor, and the necessity of prayer for the continuation of his blessings and favours.

Though much reserved in expression, with regard to abstruse subjects, they nevertheless at times manifest an inquisitive disposition respecting the creation of the world, the formation of man, and whether Indians and white people go to the same place after death, or whether they will be all of one language in a future state.

Their funeral rites are observed with great solemnity, and succeeded by deep mourning. Whatever might have been their ancient custom, as stated by some writers with respect to a place of general deposit of the bones of their dead, I find no such tradition among them at the present day. A spot of ground contiguous to each village is occupied as a place of interment, and each grave has a separate covering of boards, or clefts of wood. The corpse dressed in the best apparel is put into a coffin made of boards, when they can be procured, or otherwise bark laid beneath and over it in the grave, and sometimes a new blanket and small kettle is enclosed with it, and frequently other articles, to which the deceased was attached while living.

As they believe in the resurrection of the spirit, and that for some time after death it is common for it to ascend and descend, in order, therefore, to afford it more easy access to its former tabernacle, a hole is cut in both the head of the coffin and the covering of the tomb, the ground not being considered as any obstruction to its entrance or egress.

At these mourning processions, the women, who more generally attend than the men, and have the task of burial assigned them, give every possible vent to their passions, as also when they return to the house of the deceased, where they indulge in feasting, and extremity of grief; and this is renewed by the female relatives, and neighbours meeting at the same house every morning, for nine days, and kept up by doleful noises and lamentable cries, for about the space of half an hour. When the days of mourning are thus ended, they meet together, and are consoled to dry up their tears, from which time they endeavour to discard all marks of lamentation.

They relate circumstances that happened formerly, of ancient Indians, who were disabled from hunting, by infirmity, and becoming tired of life, would request to be buried alive. A grave or hole was then dug, in which a seat was formed in digging, the ancient Indian was then let down, and taking his last seat, the other Indians began to fill in the earth, doing it very gently and tenderly till it had risen to his chin. A



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pause was then made, and some ceremony used, after which the young warriors threw in the dirt very hastily, so as to prevent their being witnesses to his struggles, and to terminate his sufferings as speedily as possible. Happily there exists no such barbarous custom among them at the present day. They are superstitious in the extreme, with respect to dreams, and witchcraft, and councils are often called, on the most trifling occurrences of this nature. To elucidate this—in the winter of 1799, while one of the Friends was engaged in instructing the children in school learning, a message came from a confederate tribe, eighty miles distant, stating that one of their little girls had dreamed that “the devil was in all white people alike, and that they ought not to receive instruction from the Quakers, neither was it right for their children to learn to read and write.” In consequence of this circumstance, a council was called, the matter was deliberated on, and divers of them became so much alarmed, as to prevent their children from attending the school for some time.

They are also in the practice of collecting together and making feasts in remembrance of their dead, some months after the interment, under an apprehension that the deceased will receive some benefit thereby. And if an Indian of any particular tribe dreams a remarkable dream, respecting a deceased relative being hungry, or in need of sympathy, or assistance in any way, the Indians of the deceased’s particular tribe are informed of it, and a deputation is sent out to hunt. The game thus taken, is prepared and cooked, and a feast and dance in a religious way is instituted, which continues for a day or more, whereby they apprehend the wants of the deceased are satisfied.

Exclusive of these, they have frequent banquets, in which they regale themselves with strong liquors, and pass whole nights in singing, dancing, and music—performing every whimsical and antic manœuvre which their wild imaginations can invent, and which in some instances baffles description.

Their marriages are as singularly conducted as their worship, and funerals. They generally marry young, the males frequently between fourteen and eighteen, and the females from twelve to sixteen. The match is frequently agreed upon by the parents, while the children are quite young, in which case they are betrothed without consulting each other’s choice, or inclination. When they arrive at maturer age before the choice is made, and a young man has fixed on the female he wishes to make his companion, he acquaints his mother or eldest sister, if he has either living, or otherwise some female relative, of his intentions, who imparts his desires to the mother or sister, or other female relative of her with whom he is enamoured, and this proposal they communicate to the young woman.



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It is also common to present her or her father with some kind of trinkets or merchandise to the value of several dollars. If his proposal of marriage is not accepted, a negative is put upon it by returning the present, but if, after some days consideration, it is satisfactory to the young woman and parties concerned, her mother or sister accompanies her to the young man's home, and presents her to him. The mother or sister then withdraws, and she stays with her proposed husband. They appear apparently shy of each other, and now perhaps their intimacy and knowledge of each other's qualifications are only commencing. No ideas of state and grandeur—no homage of wealth—no pride of house or furniture are sought for, on these occasions. The man having signalized himself by feats of hunting, and the woman by her industry in the culture of corn and vegetables, are the criteria and summit to which their wishes aspire. As the season for planting, tending, and gathering corn, procuring firewood, &c. come on, the female connexions of the young woman assist her in the different operations during the first year, at the end of which, without any other ceremony, the nuptial tie is consummated and considered valid and honourable. They sometimes, however, take a shorter way for it, and too commonly part again on small disagreements. Although they appear to be naturally lively in their dispositions, and well calculated for social intercourse, yet the different sexes are very jealous, and apparently shy of each other, so that it is rare to see a man and woman, even of the same tribe, conversing together without witnesses. And when a woman has occasion to go from home, it is accounted honourable to take with her one or more children to testify, if needful, that she has been orderly. There are too many proofs, however, that this is only a pretended shyness, yet being sanctioned, and established by custom, it is productive of serious evils, by putting a negative on an open, friendly acquaintance of the sexes, with each other, the natural tendency whereof would be, the mutual improvement of their minds, and furnish a knowledge of each other's qualifications, which in many instances would produce undesigned and permanent attachments. Whereas they frequently marry without real affection, without a knowledge of each other's dispositions, and before the judgment is ripe for such a choice; the consequence of which is, that separations often take place—so that there are many instances among them, of men who have turned off several wives, and of women who have discarded as many husbands. These on both sides marry again (in a clandestine way) to others, and in some instances change back again, and thus what ought to be esteemed the most important connexion in life, is lightly formed and dissolved, and shifted about in a manner unknown among any people rightly civilized.

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children, and I believe their property also descends by inheritance, in the female line of succession.

It is said that, formerly, when an Indian of distinction died, his gun, blanket, knife, and other property, not buried with him, were preserved about twelve, and sometimes eighteen months. This delay was occasioned, in consequence of an opinion which they entertained, that it was not decent or respectful to bring them into use sooner; they were then sent into council, and held up to public view, the Indians present being informed that they were the goods of such a deceased chief. On the articles being thus severally held up, any of the young men who inclined, were at liberty to advance and snatch them away, till the whole were thus distributed, the relatives of the deceased making no claim in consequence of connexion. This custom though grown out of use among the Senecas, is said still to prevail among some Indian nations, in the southern states.

Although they have no regular system of laws by which they are governed, and every man is master in his own family, yet they are more or less influenced by certain principles which conduce to their general benefit. They possess their land in common, and no individual has any further security for the improvement he makes on the land, than what custom has established. This, however, is held inviolable, and no instance occurred in the course of my observation, of their encroaching on each other's property, without consent of parties; and if disputes at any time happen with respect to the boundaries of the land they wish to cultivate, the interference of the chiefs settles the difference.

The Seneca nation is composed of eight great families or tribes. These are designated by the names of Bear, Wolf, Deer, Crane, Snipe, Beaver, Turtle, and Hawk tribes. Each tribe proposes its own chiefs, and brings forward all other matters in council that particularly relate to their own people. The different tribes have each at least one Chief to represent them in council. The office of chief is not in all cases inherited in a lineal succession, but they are promoted by the will of the people, and appointed by the united consent of the chiefs in council. They have no power further than what their weight of influence gives them. Activity in hunting, wisdom in council, and exploits in war, are high traits in their character, to raise them to this station; and while they continue to hold the good opinion and respect of the nation, they are advised with, and looked up to, in all matters of difficulty; but when this good opinion ceases, they lose their influence in council, and are discarded from being actors in public affairs.

Excepting some who have private grants and specific annuities from government, their chiefs have no pecuniary advantage above other Indians, nor in their private capacity are they treated with any distinguished mark of respect.



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The genealogy of each particular tribe is traced, according to their degrees of consanguinity, by the side of the mother. They do not live in separate villages, but are settled promiscuously throughout the Seneca nation. There are also a number of inferior chiefs appointed at each village, who are called upon as counsellors, when occasions require, and no business of importance is transacted without their privity and concurrence.

These chiefs are empowered to inculcate good precepts, and encourage the youth and warriors to sobriety and good actions. And although their women are degraded below the rank they maintain in more civilized societies, yet even here they possess considerable influence, in regulating the conduct of the men, in various respects. Some of the more wise and knowing among them are frequently admitted into their councils, and give their sentiments publicly on matters of importance.

They are very jealous of encroachments on what they esteem their rights and privileges; and offences of this nature have often given rise to war between nations. Such of the captives taken in war as are preserved alive, are sometimes adopted into families, in the place of relatives who have been killed in the war. In such cases they are treated kindly: and several of this description remain among the Senecas, who have intermarried with them, and become so habituated to their manners and mode of life, that they show no inclination to leave them.

It is said many of the devoted number of captives were formerly roasted and eaten. There was living, since Friends settled among the Senecas, one or two Indians residing on the Alleghany river, who had partaken of this inhuman feasting; but the custom has long since been exploded by this nation.

Though honesty, in a general way, may be reckoned one of their signal virtues, yet instances of stealing sometimes occur.

When any discovery is made that would lead to detection of the person committing a theft, complaint is made to the chiefs, who despatch a messenger commanding his appearance forthwith before the council; this mandate he instantly obeys; the charge is then opened to him, and if he is guilty, and confession is made, the property taken is restored, if in being. Every Chief or warrior in council is then at liberty to express what they think, or wish to say, one by one, on the occasion, which the offender is obliged to hear. This is considered a severe punishment, but no other is inflicted. Should the person charged deny that he is guilty, he is considered innocent—for it is remarkable that they generally confess when justly charged, and also that their eyes and countenances immediately betray them. There is no corporeal punishment practised among them, except where the crime is considered worthy of death.



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Though honesty, in a general way, may be reckoned one of their signals virtues, yet instances of stealing sometimes occur. When any discovery is made that would lead to a person committing a theft, complaint is made to the chiefs, who despatch a messenger commanding his appearance forthwith before the council; this mandate he instantly obeys; the charge is then opened to him, and if he is guilty, and confession is made, the property taken is restored, if any being. Every Chief or warrior in council is then at liberty to express what they think, or wish to say, one by one, on the occasion, which the offender is obliged to hear. This is considered a severe punishment, but no other is inflicted. Should the person charged deny that he is guilty, he is considered innocent - for it is remarkable that they generally confess when justly charged, and also that their eyes and countenances immediately betray them. There is no corporeal punishment practised among them, except where the crime is considered worthy of death.



The Indian names are often significant of something in nature, as Cornplanter's name in the Seneca language is *Ky-on-twa-ky*; *Connudia* signifies a handsome lake, *Ogis-quah-tah* is dry musk, *Oenda* means the first ripe corn, *Yeang-gwa-haunt*, chew-tobacco, &c. They are also frequently named from occurrences that happen near the time of their birth, and their names are occasionally changed in consequence of remarkable circumstances taking place, or of particular employments, or acts of individuals.

It is supposed that in a general way the Indians rather exceed white people in longevity, often living, as they imagine, to the age of ninety and one hundred years; but as they keep no written records of births or other occurrences, nor have any regular method of computing time, other than by moons and winters, or the remembrance of remarkable events, very few of their elderly people can give a correct account how old they are. There is now living on the Alleghany river an old woman, who can call her descendants round her to the sixth generation.

There was also an Indian living at Cattaraugus, in the year 1800, who said he was one hundred and twenty-one years of age. He said he had been in Philadelphia when it was a very small town, and gave such a circumstantial and regular account of his life, as (together with his aged brow and furrowed cheeks,) induced me to credit his relation.

The Indians are frequently skilful in the application of simples, as also in the knowledge of the medicinal qualities of divers herbs and plants.

They, however, practice bleeding on trivial occasions, and when a person has been a considerable time sick, in a lingering condition, and the foregoing applications prove ineffectual to restore him to health, it is common for the friends of the diseased person to collect, and, dressing two or more men with masks and other accoutrements, as in times of public worship, they repair to the habitation of the sick, which they go round, rattling and rubbing the tortoise shell, and whooping in a frightful manner.

Although this is a known custom, and in time of health gives no alarm, yet on the debilitated Indian, whose fears are awakened by knowing what is to be endured, it has considerable effect. The men then enter the house, continuing the noise and acting every wild contortion and manœuvre which their imaginations devise. Sometimes they pull the sick person (male or female,) about the house, dirtying them with their black hands, rubbing their heads and bodies over with ashes, and handling the patient in so rough a manner, that a person unacquainted with their custom, might suppose they were going to kill him. After this wild treatment, and having thoroughly dirtied the house with ashes, they withdraw, and leave the nurse to clean after them.



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Absurd as this practice appears, in many cases it is said to have had a beneficial effect, by restoring perspiration, working on the imagination, and rousing the indisposed person to a salutary exertion.

Their idea is, that they drive away the evil spirit by this procedure.

Their skill in painting and hieroglyphics is somewhat extraordinary.

In their travelling excursions, they frequently describe on the bark of trees, by certain emblems or characters which they understand, the time they have been from home, the number of persons in company, the ensign of the tribe they belong to, the course they are going, and the number of deer or other animals they have killed.

They are also very ingenious in their idea of the geography of the country with which they are acquainted, and readily trace on a map the particular waters they have traversed, pointing out their bearings and courses.

Their reckoning of time is by moons and winters, and the length of their journey is computed by the number of days it takes to travel it.

They also divide the day into certain parts, such as morning, noon, and evening; and in speaking of the time of day, point to the sun's place in the firmament. In speaking of sun-set, they say, *Onah Gagghqua*, (the sun is gone.)

Their ideas are very confused with regard to astronomy, and they have mean conceptions of the rotundity of the earth.

They cannot conceive that a person travelling in a direct line could ever come back to the same place again, or that men can walk on the opposite side of the globe to them. They, like some of the ancients, rather favour the idea of the earth being an extended plain, and not understanding the principles of gravitation and attraction, they believe that if the world turned round, the water would unquestionably fall off from it.

Their ancient notion respecting thunder was, and still has considerable place among them, that a being whom they call Eno, sent from the Great Spirit, and inhabiting the southern mountains, was in the practice of discharging a short gun which he employed in that way, and sometimes striking the trees to show his great strength and power. They supposed him to live on large snakes and wild beasts, and that he was always a friend to the Indians, though he sometimes killed white people.

They believe that Eno sends down a stone bolt about one inch in diameter, and seven or eight in length, with which he splits trees, &c. and when they are so fortunate as to procure this bolt, they entertain an opinion that constant success will attend all their undertakings while they possess it. They also believe that fire taken from a tree burning by lightning and kindled in their houses, is an antidote against fatal



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2001

# SKETCH

OF THE

**Manners, Customs, Religion and Government**

OF THE

**SENECA INDIANS,**

**IN 1800.**

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BY HALLIDAY JACKSON.



*PHILADELPHIA:*

MARCUS T. C. GOULD, No. 6, NORTH EIGHTH STREET.

*NEW YORK:*

ISAAC T. HOPPER, No. 420, PEARL STREET.

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1830



Transcription

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## PREFACE.

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The following account of the Seneca Indians, was published some months since, in the columns of "The Friend, or Advocate of Truth;" but is now presented to the public, on a larger type, to be sold separately, or bound up with an original work upon the "Civilization of the Indian Natives," recently published from the pen of the same author.

A number of corrections have been made in the original essays, and some interesting extracts added, from the speeches of the celebrated Chief, Cornplanter, during an interview with President Washington.

Those who feel an interest in the welfare of these Aborigines of our country, have now an opportunity to rescue from oblivion this sketch of their history, at a very cheap rate, and in a form much more satisfactory than that of detached fragments, interspersed with various other matter, and scattered through several numbers of a periodical in fine type.

It may not be out of place to insert the following explanatory note, from the proprietor of the Friend or Advocate of Truth, formerly an inhabitant of the state of New York:—

"When the interior of the state of New York was first explored by Europeans, it was found in the possession of five distinct and powerful Indian nations, viz.—the *Mohawks*, *Oneidas*, *Onondagas*, *Cayugas*, and *Senecas*. These five nations, though independent, like the individual states of the present American union, had formed themselves into a confederated government, for the purpose of general defence, and held their grand national councils at *Onondaga*, the centre point of the five separate sovereignties.

In the early part of the last century, the *Tuscaroras* removed from the south, to the western part of the state of New York, and were received into the confederacy, from which time the term '*Six Nations*' has been used for general distinction."



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## An Account of the Seneca Indians.

*Collected by Jackson*

As the present seems to be an interesting crisis respecting the aborigines of our country, and particularly some of the southern tribes, whose precarious situation has awakened the feelings, and excited the sympathies of an enlightened public; and as memorials have been presented to congress, with a view of protecting this much injured race of mankind in their rightful possessions, it may, perhaps, be a means of increasing our sympathies for the Indian tribes, to bring into view the situation of those more contiguous to our borders. For if the faith of the United States is once broken, to favour the claims of any individual state, and the solemn pledges, made by President Washington, to protect the Indians in the possession of their land, are violated, to the expulsion of one nation or tribe, then the fate of the Indian is sealed. He is no longer secure within the boundaries of this great republic. As he becomes obnoxious to those of a fairer skin, and the little land he possesses, like *Naboth's vineyard*, is convenient for his master's use, he is then to be extirpated from "the inheritance of his fathers," and driven from valley to mountain, and from mountain to hill, until his feeble voice is scarcely heard even among the western wilds.

Although we hope better things of the legislators of our country, and indulge a glimmering hope, that they will still continue their protection to the aboriginal lords of the soil who kindly received and made room for our forefathers when they first landed on their shores; and ministered to their necessities, when they were strangers in a strange land; yet, from the measures in operation by some of the southern and western states, with regard to the Indian tribes within their limits, we cannot but entertain fears for their safety. It is therefore desirable, at least, to retain a history of those sons of the forest, who have made some progress in the civilized arts, and with a view of developing their native character, as well as their progress in civilization, the writer of this article designs to offer, through the medium of the Friend, or Advocate of Truth, some account of the Seneca Nation, whose situation, perhaps, above all others, would entitle them to the strongest claims of protection from the general government.

At a treaty held at Canandaigua, under the authority of the United States, with the Six Nations, dated the eleventh of November, 1794,—after describing the boundaries of the lands belonging to the Seneca nation, the treaty further states—"Now the United States acknowledge



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all land within the afore-mentioned boundaries to be the property of the Seneca nation; and the United States will never claim the same, nor disturb the Seneca nation, nor any of the Six Nations, or any of their Indian friends residing thereon, and united with them in the free use and enjoyment thereof; but it shall remain their's until they choose to sell the same to the people of the United States, who have the right to purchase."

The Seneca nation of Indians, previous to a sale they made in the year 1797, were the proprietors of the greater part of the land west of the Genesee river, in the state of New York.

By an indenture, bearing date the "fifteenth of Ninth-month, 1797," they sold to Robert Morris, in consideration of one hundred thousand dollars, to be by the said Robert Morris vested in the stock of the bank of the United States, and held in the name of the president of the United States, for the use and behoof of the Seneca nation of Indians, they bargained and sold a large tract of country mentioned in said indenture, to the said Robert Morris, "*excepting, nevertheless, and always reserving* out of this grant and conveyance, all such pieces and parcels of the aforesaid tract, and such privileges thereunto belonging, as is therein afterwards particularly mentioned, which said pieces or parcels of land so excepted, are, by the parties to the presents clearly understood *to remain the property of the said Seneca nation of Indians, in as full and ample a manner* as if the said presents had not been executed."

Agreeably to the provisions made by the treaty, these reservations were located to the Indians in such places and manner as were desired by the sachems and chiefs. The principal reservations were, the Alleghany, the Cattaraugus, the Buffalo, and the Tonnewonta, with several smaller reservations near the Genesee river, containing in all three hundred and twelve square miles, or nearly two hundred thousand acres.

The noted Chief Cornplanter, and his family or tribe, resided in Pennsylvania, a little south of the state of New York, on a tract of land secured to him and his heirs forever, by a special act of the state.

This Chief (whose Indian name is *Ki-on-twogh-ky*,) was much esteemed for his wisdom and superior skill, in directing the great councils of the nation; and finer specimens of pathetic eloquence are scarcely to be met with in the annals of history, either amongst savage or civilized nations, than are displayed in his speeches to President Washington, in the year 1790, when he, with several other noted chiefs, visited Philadelphia. These speeches, with the President's answers, the famous Chief had recorded in a book, of which the writer obtained a copy in the year 1800. They were printed some years since by the committee



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These Indians, in general, (their young people excepted,) were unhappily the victims of great intemperance, when they could obtain strong liquors; and most of the evils that afflict them might be traced to that source. This article of strong drink was sometimes carried among them by white traders, who also furnished them with abundance of silver trinkets, beads, and the like ornaments adapted to their taste.

The Indians themselves were also in the practice of trading to the frontier settlements of white people, and exchanging their skins, furs, and other merchandise, for liquor, which they often brought home to their villages, and sold out by retail. This kept many of them continually in a state of intoxication, while they could obtain the liquor, and many scenes of human wretchedness were the fatal consequences thus produced. Their aged women, in particular, were conspicuous sufferers by this evil, and were often seen lying beside the paths, overcome by it.

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