

HISTORY.

CARVER'S TRAVELS.

(Continued.)

CHAPTER III.

Of their Manners, Qualifications, &c.

WHEN the Indian women sit down they place themselves in a decent attitude, with their knees close together; but from being accustom'd to this posture, they walk badly and appear to be lame.

They have no midwives among them, their climate, or some peculiar happiness in their constitutions rendering any assistance at that time unnecessary. On these occasions they are confined but a few hours from their usual employments, which are commonly very laborious, as the men, who are remarkably indolent, leave to them every kind of drudgery; even in their hunting parties the former will not deign to bring home the game, but send their wives for it, though it lies at a very considerable distance.

The women place their children soon after they are born, on boards stuffed with soft moss, such as is found in morasses or meadows. The child is laid on its back in one of these kind of cradles, and being wrapped in skins or cloth to keep it warm, is secured in it by small bent pieces of timber.

To these machines they fasten strings, by which they hang them to a stump or stone, while they transact any needful business. In this position are the children kept for some months. When they are taken out, the boys are suffered to go naked, and the girls are covered from the neck to the knees with a shift and a short petticoat.

The Indian women are remarkably decent during their menstrual illness. Those nations that are most remote from the European settlements, as the Naudowessies, &c. are more particularly attentive to this point; though they all without exception adhere in some degree to the same custom.

In every camp or town there is an apartment appropriated for their retirement, to which both single and married

retreat, and seclude themselves with the utmost strictness during this period from all society. Afterwards they purify themselves in running streams, and return to their different employments.

The men on these occasions most carefully avoid holding any communication with them; and the Naudowessies are so rigid in this observance, that they will not suffer any belonging to them to fetch such things as are necessary, even fire, from these female lunar retreats, though the want of them is attended with the greatest inconvenience. They are also so superstitious as to think, if a pipe stem crack, which among them is made of wood, that the possessor has either lighted it at one of those polluted fires, or held some unlawful converse with a woman during her retirement, which is esteemed by them most disgraceful and wicked.

The Indians are extremely circumspect and deliberate in every word and action; there is nothing that hurries them into any intemperate warmth, but that inveteracy to their enemies which is rooted in every Indian heart, and can never be eradicated. In all other instances they are cool and remarkably cautious, taking care not to betray on any account whatever their emotions. If an Indian has discovered that a friend is in danger of being intercepted and cut off by one to whom he has rendered himself obnoxious, he does not inform him in plain and explicit terms of the hazard he runs by pursuing the track near which the enemy lies in wait for him, but he first coolly asks him which way he is going that day; and having received his answer, with the same indifference tells him that he has been informed that a dog lies near the spot which might probably do him a mischief. This hint proves sufficient, and his friend avoids the danger with as much caution as if every design and motion of his enemy had been pointed out to him.

This apathy often shews itself on occasions that would call forth all the fervour of a susceptible heart. If an Indian has been absent from his family and friends many months, either on a war or

hunting party, when his wife and children meet him at some distance from his habitation, instead of the affectionate sensations which would naturally arise in the breast of more refined beings, and be productive of mutual congratulations, he continues his course without paying the least attention to those who surround him, till he arrives at his home.

He there sits down, and with the same unconcern as if he had not been absent a day, smokes his pipe; those of his acquaintance who have followed him to the same; and perhaps it is several hours before he relates to them the incidents which have befallen him during his absence, though perhaps he has lost a father, brother, or son on the field, whose loss he ought to have lamented, or has been unsuccessful in the undertaking that called him from home.

Has an Indian been engaged for several days in the chase, or any other laborious expedition, and by accident continued thus long without food, when he arrives at the hut or tent of a friend where he knows his wants may be immediately supplied, he takes care not to shew the least symptoms of impatience, or to betray the extreme hunger by which he is tortured; but on being invited in, sits contentedly down, and smokes his pipe, with as much composure as if every appetite was allayed, and he was perfectly at ease; he does the same if among strangers. This custom is strictly adhered to by every tribe, as they esteem it a proof of fortitude, and think the reverse would enable them to the appellation of women.

If you tell an Indian that his children have greatly signalized themselves against an enemy, have taken many scalps, and brought home many prisoners, he does not appear to feel any extraordinary pleasure on the occasion; his answer generally is, "it is well," and he makes very little further enquiry about it. On the contrary, if you inform him that his children are slain or taken prisoners, he makes no complaints, he only replies, "It does not signify;" and probably, for some time at least, asks not how it happened.