

bers and physical strength by the insidious supply of ardent spirits; they have dwindled to a miserable remnant, which, in the course of a few generations, will utterly disappear from the face of the earth. It has therefore become an object of desirable inquiry, and of great attraction in many respects, to collect as much information as possible on this singular people, before the extinction which we confidently anticipate, and which few, we believe, who have had opportunities of observing the events of late years in North America, will incline to doubt. Every memorial which can be preserved of their character, and customs, and opinions, must acquire increased value; and we cannot on this subject—to us a melancholy one—put together the few remarks and facts for which we have leisure, without feeling that we may be affording not only some gratification to our present readers, but rendering an acceptable service to the curious inquirer hereafter. The absurd exaggerations and errors on the moral and physical character of the Indians, into which Raynal and other writers of the last century have fallen; the yet more preposterous theories on the origin and history of these tribes, which it has lately been attempted to raise or to revive, it would be a vain labour to notice. Merely observing, by the way, that America bids fair to produce a very sapient order of antiquaries, we shall not stop to dispute the old opinion adopted by Adair and Dr. Boudinot, that the Indians are the descendants of the long lost ten tribes of Israel; neither shall we examine what Mr. Buchanan, the compiler of one of the volumes before us, is facetiously pleased to call ‘the sublime hypothesis’ of Governor De Witt Clinton of New York, who contends that ‘their derivation is to be sought among the Tartars, who in ages past over-ran and exterminated nations who then inhabited great part of North America, and had made considerable progress in the arts of civilized life.’

Our acquaintance with the peculiarities of Indian customs and character has unfortunately in general been derived from the reports of traders—usually the most ignorant, and depraved, and dishonest part of the transatlantic white population; or of persons totally uneducated, who have lived in captivity or from choice among them; or of well-meaning but illiterate and simple missionaries. Until of late years we could scarcely expect to possess any other instruments of communication with the Indian tribes than these; for educated Englishmen could very rarely be thrown into contact with them; but the last war in the Canadas brought our troops, on the western frontier at least of those provinces, into constant association with the most warlike and the least corrupted of their bands. Many circumstances of deep and romantic interest are attached to the events of our alliance with them.