

for me the censure of those critics, who sometimes, unthinkingly or unmercifully, sit at home at their desks, enjoying the luxury of wine and a good cigar, over the simple narration of the honest and weather-worn traveller (who shortens his half-starved life in catering for the world), to condemn him and his work to oblivion, and his wife and his little children to poverty and starvation; merely because he describes scenes which they have not beheld, and which, consequently, they are unable to believe.

The Indians of North America, as I have before said, are copper-coloured, with long black hair, black eyes, tall, straight, and elastic forms—are less than two millions in number—were originally the undisputed owners of the soil, and got their title to their lands from the Great Spirit who created them on it,—were once a happy and flourishing people, enjoying all the comforts and luxuries of life which they knew of, and consequently cared for;—were sixteen millions in numbers, and sent that number of daily prayers to the Almighty, and thanks for his goodness and protection. Their country was entered by white men, but a few hundred years since; and thirty millions of these are now scuffling for the goods and luxuries of life, over the bones and ashes of twelve millions of red men; six millions of whom have fallen victims to the small-pox, and the remainder to the sword, the bayonet, and whiskey; all of which means of their death and destruction have been introduced and visited upon them by acquisitive white men; and by white men, also, whose forefathers were welcomed and embraced in the land where the poor Indian met and fed them with “ears of green corn and with pemican.” Of the two millions remaining alive at this time, about 1,400,000, are already the miserable living victims and dupes of white man’s cupidity, degraded, discouraged, and lost in the bewildering maze that is produced by the use of whiskey and its concomitant vices; and the remaining number are yet unroused and unenticed from their wild haunts or their primitive modes, by the dread or love of white man and his allurements.

It has been with these, mostly, that I have spent my time, and of these, chiefly, and their customs, that the following Letters treat. Their habits (and their’s alone) as we can see them transacted, are native, and such as I have wished to fix and preserve for future ages.

Of the dead, and of those who are dying, of those who have suffered death, and of those who are now trodden and kicked through it, I may speak more fully in some deductions at the close of this book; or at some future time, when I may find more leisure, and may be able to speak of these scenes without giving offence to the world, or to any body in it.

Such a portrait then as I have set forth in the following pages (taken by myself from the free and vivid realities of life, instead of the vague and uncertain imagery of recollection, or from the haggard deformities and distortions of disease and death), I offer to the world for their amusement, as well as for their information; and I trust they will pardon me, if it should be thought