

THE INDIAN NATIONS.

A short account of the Customs and manners of the North American Indians, particularly of the Chippeway Nation. By KAHKEWAQUONABY, Indian Chief.

In view of the mournful fact, that before the white man came to this country, the red men were far more numerous and powerful than what they are at present, I have been led to enquire what have been the causes of the rapid decrease in the numbers of my countrymen. I have put the question to the Indian over whose head many winters have passed, who during his protracted life has seen the sun set over many of his fellows, never again to rise and shine upon the red man's wigwam that he might welcome the rising orb of day, and who has heard the expiring wail of a once numerous and powerful tribe. In reply he has given me the following picture:—

“My son, before the white man landed on our shores, the red men of the forest were numerous, powerful, wise, and happy; and at that time nothing but the weight of many winters brought them down to the grave. The mother could then rear up a large family. The game in the forest, and the fish in the waters supplied their wants abundantly. The Indian corn, grew rank and tall, brought forth much; and all had plenty to eat. The old men made their feasts, smoked their pipes, and thought upon their *munedoos* (gods); they sang and beat upon the *tawaegun* (drum), the young men and women danced; the powows visited the sick, sang, and invoked their gods, applied their medicines gathered from nature's stores, and so drove away the grim monster death. These were happy days of peace and plenty to our forefathers.

“My son, whilst our fathers were in this happy state, they cast their eyes towards the sun-rising, and beheld a big canoe making its appearance, which approached nearer and nearer to the shores of America, outbraving the waves of the mighty waters. A strange people landed, wise as the gods, powerful as the thunder, with faces as white as the snow. Our fathers held out to them the hand of friendship; they then

asked for a small piece of land, on which they might pitch their tents. By and bye they begged for more, which was given them, and in this way they have continued ever since to ask, or take by force, what the Indians would not consent to give up. As the white man encroached, the Indian retired back to make room for him, and thus by little and little they have lost their hunting grounds and corn fields, being driven far from the land of comfort and plenty. Their children began to cry for food, their souls faint for want, their clothes dropped from their backs, the fatal measles and small-pox came, (diseases unknown before,) and swept away the poor Indians by hundreds. Thus driven almost to despair, they were sometimes compelled to take up the tomahawk against their encroaching neighbours; but instead of conquering this only made way for a more general massacre. And then, as if disease and the musket could not mow down the Indian fast enough, the *fire waters* in the shape of a friend stepped in, and began to gnaw and eat their very vitals, debasing their morals, lowering their dignity, spreading fire-brands, confusion, and death!

My son, these are the things which have been the cause of the melting away of our forefathers like snow before a warm sun. The Great Spirit has been angry with us for our drunkenness, and for our many crooked ways.”

IDEAS OF THEIR ORIGIN.

For several years past I have made enquiry from the aged Sachems of the *Ojebway** nation of Indians, as to the ideas they and our forefathers entertained of our origin, and all the information I have been enabled to gain on this subject amounts to the following. That many, many winters ago, the Great Spirit, whom we call in

* Of which *Chippeway* is a corruption.