

INTRODUCTION.

The following narrative of the captivity of John Gyles among the Indians of the St. John River, independently of its interest as a tale of human suffering and endurance, is of great value as a means of illustrating the manners and customs of the Indian tribes of Acadie. It is this consideration which is mainly the cause of its republication now, for it is the only authentic narrative that is known to exist of any lengthened residence among the savage tribes of Acadie during the seventeenth century, the period of their greatest power and greatest activity. Without it we might form a tolerable conjecture of the mode of life of the aborigines of our country, but the narrative of Gyles, in its simple and truthful quaintness, introduces us to those barbarous people as they actually were, tells us how they lived, what privations they endured, shows us, in short, the Indian stripped of his paint and feathers and without those romantic surroundings amid which writers of poetry and some historians have delighted to depict him. By the light of such a narrative, we are able to perceive how wretched was the lot of an Acadian Indian, even during the period when his very name carried terror to the hearts of the settlers of New Hampshire and Maine. Modern civilization may have degraded him in some respects, but it has elevated him in others. It has rescued him from the danger of starvation to which in his pristine state he was constantly exposed, and also from the cruel necessity of abandoning the aged and feeble of his kindred to perish, when unable longer to supply their own wants or endure the constant journeys necessitated by the nature of their nomad life.

A vast deal of nonsense has been written about the North American Indians, and perhaps on no point have the writers who conceive their vague fancies to be solemn facts, exhausted their rhetoric to a greater extent than in regard to the supposed inevitable doom of the Red Man, which they conceive to be his utter extinction. If, as appears to be the belief in some of the Western United States, the proper thing to do with every Indian is to shoot him, then of course the extinction of the race would seem to be inevitable, but fortunately this simple policy is not likely to be universally adopted. There is no