

are never omitted, nor are presents wanting upon this occasion. After some time, they revisit the grave; they renew their sorrow; they new clothe the remains of the body, and act over again the solemnities of the first funeral.

Of all their instances of regard to their deceased friends, none is so striking as what they call the feast of the dead, or the feast of souls. The day of this ceremony is appointed in the council of their chiefs, who give orders for every thing which may enable them to celebrate it with pomp and magnificence. The riches of the nation are exhausted on this occasion, and all their ingenuity displayed. The neighbouring people are invited to partake of the feast, and to be witnesses of the solemnity. At this time, all who have died since the last solemn feast of that kind are taken out of their graves. Those who have been interred at the greatest distance from the villages are diligently sought for, and brought to this great rendezvous of carcases. It is not difficult to conceive the horror of this general disinterment. 'Without question,' says Lafitau, 'the opening of these tombs displays one of the most striking scenes that can be conceived; this humbling portrait of human misery, in so many images of death, wherein she seems to take a pleasure to paint herself in a thousand various shapes of horror, in the several carcases, according to the degree in which corruption has prevailed over them, or the manner in which it has attacked them. Some appear dry and withered; others have a sort of parchment upon their bones; some look as if they were baked and smoaked, without any appearance of rottenness; some are just turning towards the point of putrefaction; whilst others are all swarming with worms, and drowned in corruption. I know not which ought to strike us most, the horror of so shocking a sight, or the tender piety and affection of these poor people towards their departed friends; for nothing deserves our admiration more, than that eager diligence and attention with which they discharge this melancholy duty of their tenderness; gathering up carefully even the smallest bones; handling the carcases, disgusting as they are, with every thing loathsome; cleansing them from the worms, and carrying them upon their shoulders through tiresome journeys of several days, without being discouraged by their insupportable stench, and without suffering any other emotions to arise, than

those of regret, for having lost persons who were so dear to them in their lives, and so lamented in their death.'

This strange festival is the most magnificent and solemn which they have; not only on account of the great concourse of natives and strangers, and of the pompous reinterment they give to their dead, whom they dress in the finest skins they can get, after having exposed them some time in this pomp; but for the games of all kinds which they celebrate upon the occasion, in the spirit of those which the ancient Greeks and Romans celebrated upon similar occasions.

In this manner do they endeavour to sooth the calamities of life, by the honours they pay their dead; honours, which are the more cheerfully bestowed, because in his turn each man expects to receive them himself. Though amongst these savage nations this custom is impressed with strong marks of the ferocity of their nature; an honour for the dead, a tender feeling of their absence, and a revival of their memory, are some of the most excellent instruments for smoothing our rugged nature into humanity. In civilized nations ceremonies are less practised, because other instruments for the same purposes are less wanted; but it is certain a regard for the dead is ancient and universal.

Though the women in America have generally the laborious part of the economy upon themselves, yet they are far from being the slaves they appear, and are not at all subject to the great subordination in which they are placed in countries where they seem to be more respected. On the contrary, all the honours of the nation are on the side of the women. They even hold their councils, and have their share in all deliberations which concern the state; nor are they found inferior in the part they act.—Polygamy is practised by some nations, but it is not general. In most they content themselves with one wife; but a divorce is admitted, and for the same causes that it was allowed amongst the Jews, Greeks, and Romans. No nation of the Americans is without a regular marriage, in which there are many ceremonies; the principal of which is, the bride's presenting the bridegroom with a plate of their corn.

Incontinent before wedlock, after marriage the chastity of their women is remarkable.—The punishment of the adulteress, as well as that of the adulterer, is in the hands of the