

footing among them. In fact, almost the whole number of the Dènè-Dindjié is Christian and Catholic.

Our red skins are also grown up children all their life long. It is not that they are devoid of intelligence and reason; on the contrary, they have sagacity and penetration, and possess to a high degree the talent peculiar to children, of estimating at a first encounter the good and bad qualities of a man; of exhibiting the defects and ridiculous side of each, and of indulging in criticism, in the shape of a running fire of jokes and jests. In fact, railery is often the weapon of the cowardly, or at least of the weak; but our Indians indulge in it without malice, and in their mouth there is no lack of Attic salt. If they could paint, the Montagnais, especially, would be good caricaturists.

The Dènè-Dindjié, then, are not destitute of spirit, and they can reason on everything; but their sphere is limited, their mind and reason have not been exercised, they want the power of comparison, and their reasonings are stamped with an odd originality, which sometimes turns into burlesque. Their intellect is evidently in the swaddling bands of infancy, their faculties are as if asleep, or restrained by an obstacle which is only that abnormal condition which we call the savage state. With them, reason never rises higher than induction; their judgments remain puerile, and consequently natural, and it is not reasoning which has power over them and by which they can be convinced.

They possess in a high degree the faculties of the senses, the wants and instincts common to them with the lower animals, such as those of self-preservation and reproduction, the memory of places, the force of habit, routine and the love of children. I may say as much of their facility for acquiring languages. Their sight may be compared to that of the eagle; their sense of smell is perfect; but the

senses of taste, touch and hearing, are as if obliterated by their privations, sufferings and rigor of the climate.

Their perceptive faculties are equally enfeebled or depraved by the lewdness of their imagination, fear or superstition. There are no idiots among them, nor what may, strictly speaking, be called insane, but there are many laboring under hallucinations and monomanias. What the British traveller Pallas says of the excessive excitability of the Samoides, of the Tongoos and other natives of the North of Asia, is fully applicable to the Dènè-Dindjié. Whatever be the cause, this excessive nervous excitability so disturbs their organism, that it makes them lose the self-control so peculiar to the redskins; but what is worse, this morbid affection of their imagination acts sympathetically on their neighbors. We have seen numbers of these manias passing by contagion through whole tribes and into all latitudes. The heathen women are especially subject to them. In certain cases the hallucinations of one or two take such possession of a whole tribe, that it leads to the most extravagant actions.

Every year, during summer, fear is communicated to them as an epidemic. They then live in continual fright, and in dread of an imaginary enemy who constantly pursues them, and whom they fancy they see everywhere, although he exists nowhere.

I attribute to this morbid and sympathetic affection the acts of cannibalism which unhappily have taken place in almost all the tribes before their conversion. The pangs of hunger and the excessive fear of death render these Indians so stupid, that, so far from thinking of looking abroad for food, they fall on one another, slaughtering each other without pity, in contempt of the legitimate affections of nature. The Montagnais have less to reproach themselves with in this respect than other tribes, because they lead a solitary existence,