

The Loucheux generally live in large parties, each band headed by a chief and one or more medicine men. The latter, however, do not possess any secular power as chiefs, but they acquire an authority by shamanism to which even the chiefs themselves are subject.

All the chiefs, medicine men, and those who possess rank acquired by property have two, three, or more wives, so that only few of the young men have wives, unless they can content themselves with some old cast-off widow, who, from ill health and the effects of bad treatment, is no longer able to perform heavy work. The consequence is that those who have wives are invariably jealous, and treat their women most brutally. It is one of the principal causes of the great falling off of the Loucheux nation. They are not half the number they used to be. The other causes of the decrease in the population are female infanticide, and premature birth and very frequent miscarriages from over exertion, &c. Infanticide is caused by the misery of the women—at least, this is the only reason they give for it. When questioned on the subject, they invariably give the same answer, "that they love their children, and destroy them only to save them from the hardships and misery to which their mothers are exposed in this life." To preserve them alive is equivalent to the unnatural crime of a mother wilfully placing her daughter in misery. When a young man has acquired the means, he purchases a young girl (perhaps an infant) from its mother, who has the power to dispose of her daughter to whom she pleases, though no doubt she will sometimes consult the wishes of her husband. The fathers and brothers have no voice in the matter by the laws of the tribe. The females are fewer than the men, especially when young, and might be considered pretty, but they get proportionably coarse and ugly as they grow old, owing to hard labor and bad treatment. The very low position which they occupy in the social scale, is a sign of the depth to which the Loucheux are still sunk in barbarism. The women are literally beasts of burden to their lords and masters. All the heavy work is performed by them. When an animal is killed, they carry the meat and skin on their backs to the camp, after which they have the additional labor of dressing the skin, cutting up the meat and drying it. They are the drawers of wood and water; all the household duties devolve upon them; they have to keep up the fires, cook, &c., besides all the other work supposed to belong to the women, such as lacing the snow shoes for the family, making and mending their husband's and children's clothes, &c. In raising the camp, or travelling from one place to another, if, in winter, the woman hauls all the baggage, provisions, lodge poles, cooking utensils, with probably a couple of children on the top of all, besides an infant on the back, while the husband walks quietly on ahead with his gun, horn and shot-pouch, and empty hunting bag. In the summer the man uses a small light hunting canoe, requiring very little exertion to propel it through the water, while the poor woman is forced to struggle against the current in a large ill-made canoe, laden with all the baggage, straining every nerve to reach a particular place pointed out beforehand by her master as the intended camping ground.

They are a lively, pleasant race, and have many rules and regulations, which are strictly adhered to both in public and private life. Their games and pastimes are more manly and rational than those of the dull, apathetic Slaves. They are passionately fond of dancing, wrestling, running, &c., in all which sports the women, especially the younger, take a part. Their dances, which are accompanied by singing, are not void of harmony, as they keep time with their bodies, beating cadence with their feet, and moving themselves in grotesque though not unpleasant postures, which are apparently rather difficult to perform, as they perspire profusely. Their wrestling matches are commenced generally by two little boys. When one of them is thrown he retires and another, a little bigger, takes his place. As soon as he has thrown his opponent he rises up quickly and places himself in preparation for the next, who will make a sudden