

they have in each of their towns for the purpose, upon every solemn occasion, to receive ambassadors, to deliver them an answer, to sing their traditional war songs, or to commemorate their dead. These councils are public. Here they propose all such matters concerning the state, as have been already digested in the secret councils, at which none but the head men assist. Here it is that their orators are employed, and display those talents which distinguish them for eloquence and knowledge of public business; in both of which some of them are admirable. None else speak in their public councils; these are their ambassadors, and these are the commissioners who are appointed to treat of peace or alliance with other nations. The chief skill of these orators consists in giving an artful turn to affairs, and in expressing their thoughts in a bold figurative manner, much stronger than we could bear in this part of the world, and with gestures equally violent, but often extremely natural and expressive.

When any business of consequence is transacted, they appoint a feast upon the occasion, of which almost the whole nation partakes.—There are lesser feasts upon matters of less general concern, to which none are invited but they who are engaged in that particular business. At these feasts it is against all rule to leave any thing; so that if they cannot consume all, what remains is thrown into the fire; for they look upon fire as a thing sacred, and in all probability these feasts were anciently sacrifices. Before the entertainment is ready, the principal person begins a song, the subject of which is the fabulous or real history of their nation, the remarkable events which have happened, and whatever matters may make for their honour or instruction. The others sing in their turn. They have dances too, with which they accompany their songs, chiefly of a martial kind; and no solemnity or public business is carried on without such songs and dances. Every thing is transacted amongst them with much ceremony; which in a barbarous people is necessary; for nothing else could hinder all their affairs from going to confusion; besides that the ceremonies contribute to fix all transactions the better in their memory.

The same council of their elders which regulates whatever regards the external policy of the state, has the charge likewise of its internal peace and order. Criminal matters come before

the same jurisdiction, when they are so flagrant as to become a national concern. In ordinary cases, the crime is either revenged or compromised by the parties concerned. If a murder is committed, the family which has lost a relation prepares to retaliate on that of the offender. They often kill the murderer, and when this happens, the kindred of the last person slain look upon themselves to be as much injured, and think themselves as much justified in taking vengeance, as if the violence had not begun amongst themselves. But, in general, things are determined in a more amicable manner.—The offender absents himself; his friends send a compliment of condolance to those of the party murdered; presents are offered, which are rarely refused; and, as usual, the whole ends in mutual feasting, songs, and dances. If the murder is committed by one of the same family, or cabin, that cabin has the full right of judgment, without appeal, within itself, either to punish the guilty with death, or to pardon him, or to force him to give some recompence to the wife or children of the slain.

The Indians that have had a long intercourse with Europeans seem to be greatly degenerated, both in physical and mental qualities. Those of different nations, and from different parts of America connected with Canada, come annually to Quebec, to Montreal, and to other military posts, to receive the presents which the governments annually distribute amongst them; and they are thus described by a recent traveller:—‘Conceive to yourself a parcel of men, women, and children, huddled together under a wigwam, formed of pieces of wood, seven or eight feet in length, the ends fixed in the ground, and meeting at the top, form a kind of sloping frame, which is covered with the bark of the birch-tree, to keep out the inclemencies of the weather—a very poor covering indeed. They are *half* naked, *wholly* covered with dirt, and oily paints, and swarming with vermin; diminutive, and weakly in their persons and appearance; and having a physiognomy, in which you look in vain for traces of intelligence. I do not mean to say that they are without the reasoning faculty, but they certainly appear excessively stupid. I understand that their numbers decrease every year,—if they were wholly extinct, I do not think that human nature would be a great sufferer by it.’

In fact, the eloquence and magnanimity which