

*An account of the customs and manners peculiar to some of the tribes of the North American Indians, extracted from "Henry's Travels in the Indian Territories."*

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It is the characteristic of all ignorant persons to attempt by the aid of spells and enchantments to lift up the veil of futurity and to seek to know what is in the womb of time. Among Indians as well as others this is practised. Their want of experience of the past leads them to entertain doubts concerning the future; and instead of taking the necessary precautions, to insure success, they will be either deterred from, or urged on to the performance of any great undertaking; according to the answer they may receive from the oracle which they consult on the occasion. Even the proceedings of individuals or families will be regulated by this. Omens and dreams are matters of peculiar attention with them. Sometimes after an expensive preparation has been made for some expedition or hunting party, and even after they have proceeded so far on their destined route, an unfavourable dream which one of them chances to have, will upset the whole plan and induce them to alter the course of their journey, perhaps to abandon the project entirely. This is the slavery of superstition in which the ignorant mind is always bound, and which is often witnessell among nations who claim the character of being civilized. It is the same feeling which induces the Indians before proceeding upon any undertaking which may be influential on them as a nation and of which the following is an instance. After the French had ceded Canada to the Crown of England, sometime elapsed before the various Indian nations could be brought to acknowledge the King of Britain as their new father. It was however effected without much bloodshed. The accomplishment of this enterprise was intrusted to Sir William Johnson, and after a part of these Indians had submitted to him, he made a feast upon the occasion, and dispatched messengers to the rest, asking them to join him. The arrival of these was of course a matter of great importance among the more remote tribes, and many of them before they would consent to enter upon any arrangement, or give an answer to Sir William's messenger, had recourse to their oracles of the highest class, to learn from them what would be the result of their doing so. This is termed consulting the *Great Turtle*, and which is done in the following manner.

"For invoking and consulting the Great Turtle, the first thing to be done was the building of a large house or wigwam, within which was placed a species of tent, for the use of the priest, and reception of the spirit. The tent was formed of mooseskins, hung over a framework of wood. Five poles, or rather pillars, of five different species of timber, about ten feet in height, and eight inches in diameter, were set in a circle of about four feet in diameter. The holes made to receive them were about two feet deep; and the pillars being set, the holes were filled up again, with the earth which had been dug out.— At top, the pillars were bound together by a circular hoop, or girder.