

belong. Le Moyne drew his scenes of Indian life many years after his return from America, while living in England, and as he executed these delineations from memory, they are doubtless deficient in that minuteness of detail which entitles to safe comparisons and deductions.

Among some tribes of the interior marine shells seem to have been looked upon with a kind of religious reverence, and indications are not wanting that they played a part in their religious ceremonies. The peculiar sound produced by a sea-shell when approached to the ear necessarily appeared strange and mysterious to them, and the rareness of the shells, together with their elegant forms and beautiful colors, doubtless increased their value in the eyes of the natives. According to Long, the Omahas possessed, about half a century ago, a large shell (already transmitted from generation to generation) to which they paid an almost religious veneration. "A skin lodge or temple," says Long, "is appropriated for its preservation, in which a person constantly resides, charged with the care of it, and appointed its guard. It is placed upon a stand and is never suffered to touch the earth. It is concealed from the sight by several envelops, which are composed of strands of the proper skins, plaited and joined together in the form of a mat. The whole constitutes a parcel of considerable size, from which various articles are suspended, such as tobacco and roots of certain plants. No person dares to open all the coverings of this sacred deposit in order to expose the shell to view. Tradition informs them that curiosity induced three different persons to examine the mysterious shell, who were immediately punished for their profanation by instant and total loss of sight. The last of these offenders, whose name is Ish-ka-tappe, is still living. It was ten years since that he attempted so unveil the sacred shell, but, like his predecessors, he was visited with blindness, which still continues, and is attributed by the Indians, as well as by himself, to his committing of the forbidden act. This shell is taken with the band to all the national hunts, and is then transported on the back of a man. Previously to undertaking a national expedition against an enemy, the sacred shell is consulted as an oracle. For this purpose the magi of the band seat themselves around the great medicine lodge, the lower part of which is then thrown up like curtains and the exterior envelop is carefully removed from the mysterious parcel, that the shell may receive air. A portion of the tobacco, consecrated by being long suspended to the skin-mats or coverings of the shell, is now taken and distributed to the magi, who fill their pipes with it to smoke to the great medicine. During this ceremony an individual occasionally inclines his head forward and listens attentively to catch some sound which he expects to issue from the shell. At length, some one imagines that he hears a sound like that of a forced expiration of air from the lungs, or like the noise made by the report of a gun at a great distance. This is considered as a favorable omen, and the nation prepare for the projected expedition with a confidence of success. But, on the contrary, should no