

were of what we may call a moral rather than a legal character. His religion was all that fancy could paint in the hours of waking and all that dreams could suggest in the hours of sleep. His manners were the offspring of a proud sincerity, tempered by the gentler qualities of extreme hospitality and boundless generosity. Beggars were unknown amongst the Indian races, for they accounted it not less disgraceful than inhuman that food and raiment should be lacking for one when it existed in abundance for others. The vulgar greed of ordinary commerce was wholly unknown to them as well, and when the Indians saw the trade artifices of the white man reducing him, as they said, to the level of a wolverine, they laughed and shrugged their shoulders in scorn. In the fine arts, of course, they were not abreast of the Eastern nations, either in range or in degree, but the taste displayed by them in their personal ornamentation was both artistic and original, for good taste no less than grace of bodily action was a quality that belonged by natural birthright to the Indian race.

In point of speech and of their spoken tongues there has been nothing more soft and beautiful in the history of language, and their songs possessed all the sweetness of the finest and most melodious specimens of our modern vocal music. To nature they went for inspiration—since, indeed, they lived in the very bosom of nature—and their accents, like their metaphors, were those of the wind in the forest, the birds of the air, the animals of the chase, and the sounds of waters.