

families were enjoined to relate to their sons, and to their son's sons, the remarkable events which they had witnessed themselves; and in estimating this source of history, we should recollect, how much more perfect tradition was, in the days when it was of great consequence, than any thing of the kind can be now, when we have so many other opportunities of recording even the minute events of passing time, and of course, when none but trifling occurrences will be trusted merely to the memory. These traditions also, were often delivered in public; "in the gate," or at the market-place, that many might bear witness, and the report of one, corroborate or correct, the tradition of his neighbour.

An interesting advance on this mere oral relation of extraordinary events, was made, by the original inhabitants of the Continent on which we now reside. The *Indian* tribes had their Councils and their treaties; and had adopted various signs to seal their agreements, and to retain them in distinct recollection. The Canadians and other Indians had a current money, which they called *Wampum*; it was made of the inside of Conque and Muscle shells, and shaped like beads. These beads were strung together, and were woven into strips about four inches in width and two feet in length. In this shape they were called belts; and were used as pledges and memorials on important occasions. In forming treaties, a belt of Wampum was laid down by the Chief Speaker, at the conclusion of each distinct proposition, and, if taken up by the other party, was considered at once the bond and the token of the agreement. In sending Missions to distant tribes, the messengers received one or more belts to deliver, each belt to be accompanied by a certain speech of which it was the emblem.—Thus these simple people, aware of the fleeting nature of spoken language, reduced their national dealings to a few propositions, and by giving a sign with each, hoped to fasten them, and to be able to recal the matter signified at a future opportunity, by referring to the symbol. We may not be able to appreciate this practise, because our records are so much more perfectly preserved; but those who love scientific pursuits, know, that they attach infinitely greater signification to certain lines and figures, than those do who are unacquainted with that which the figures represent; and we all may recollect instances of unlettered individuals of our own Country, resorting to particular marks and tokens, to remind them of circumstances which they could not take a written account of. The memory and the imagination wonderfully accomodate themselves to the demands made on them, and the Peasant often exhibits natural acuteness, unknown to the philosopher and the scholar.

In illustration of the use made of these belts of Wampum by the