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Sketches Of The History Of Man

In Two Volumes

Home, Henry

Edinburgh, 1774

Sketch XII. Origin and Progress of American Nations.

urn:nbn:de:gbv:45:1-697

S K E T C H X I I .

Origin and Progress of AMERICAN NATIONS.

HAVING no authentic materials for a natural history of all the Americans, the following observations shall be confined to a few tribes, the best known; and to the kingdoms of Peru and Mexico, as they were at the date of the Spanish conquest.

As there appears no passage by land to America from the old world, no problem has more embarrassed the learned, than to give an account from whence the Americans sprung: there are as many different opinions, as there are writers. Many attempts have been made for discovering a passage by land; but hitherto in vain. Kamskatka, it is true, is divided from America by a narrow strait, full of islands: and M. Buffon, to render the passage still more easy than by sea, conjectures, that thereabout there may formerly have been a land-passage, tho' now wash'd away by violence of the ocean. There is indeed great appearance of truth in this conjecture; as all the quadrupeds of the north of Asia seem to have made their way to America; the bear, for example, the roe, the deer, the rein-deer, the beaver, the wolf, the fox, the hare, the rat, the mole. He admits, that in America there is not to be seen a lion, a tiger, a panther, or any other Asiatic quadruped of a hot climate: not, says he, for want of a land-passage;

sage; but because the cold climate of Tartary, in which such animals cannot subsist, is an effectual bar against them*.

But in my apprehension, much more is required to give satisfaction upon this subject, than a passage from Kamskatka to America, whether by land or sea. An enquiry much more decisive is totally overlooked, relative to the people on the two sides of the streight; particularly, whether they speak the same language. Now by late accounts from Russia we are informed, that there is no affinity between the Kamskatkan tongue, and that of the Americans on the opposite side of the streight. Whence we may conclude, with great certainty, that the latter are not a colony of the former.

But I go farther. There are several cogent arguments to evince, that the Americans are not descended from any people in the north of Asia or in the north of Europe. Were they descended from either, Labrador, or the adjacent countries, must have been first peopled. And as savages are remarkably fond of their natal soil, they would have continued there, till by over-population they should have been compelled to spread wider for food. But the fact is directly contrary. When America was discovered by the Spaniards, Mexico and Peru were fully peopled; and the other parts less and less, in proportion to their distance from these central countries. Fabry reports, that one may travel one or two hundred leagues north-west from the Mississippi, without seeing a human face, or any vestige of a house. And some French offi-

* Our author, with singular candor, admits it as a strong objection to his theory, that there are no rain-deer in Asia. But it is doing no more but justice to so fair a reasoner, to observe, that according to the latest accounts, there are plenty of rain-deer in the country of Kamskatka, which of all is the nearest to America.



cers say, that they travelled more than a hundred leagues from the delicious country watered by the Ohio, through Louisiana, without meeting a single family of savages. Labrador is very thin of inhabitants; no people having been discovered in it, but the Esquimaux, a very small tribe. And as that tribe has plenty of food at home, there is no appearance, that they ever sent a colony to any other part of America. The civilization of the Mexicans and Peruvians, as well as their populousness, make it extremely probable that they were the first inhabitants of America. In travelling northward, the people are more and more ignorant and savage: the Esquimaux, the most northern of all, are the most savage. In travelling southward, the Patagonians, the most southern of all, are so stupid as to go naked in a bitter cold region.

I venture still farther; which is, to conjecture, that America has not been peopled from any part of the old world. The external appearance of the inhabitants, makes this conjecture approach to a certainty; as that appearance differs widely from the appearance of any other known people. Excepting the eye-lashes, eye-brows, and hair of the head, which is invariably jet black, there is not a single hair on the body of any American: not the least appearance of a beard. Another distinguishing mark is their copper-colour, uniformly the same in all climates, hot and cold; and differing from the colour of all other nations. Ulloa remarks, that the Americans of Cape Breton, resemble the Peruvians in complexion, in manners, and in customs; the only visible difference being, that the former are of a larger stature. A third circumstance no less distinguishing is, that American children are born with down upon the skin, which disappears the eighth or ninth day, and never grows again. Children of the old world are born with skins smooth and polished, and no down appears till puberty.

That the original inhabitants of America are a race distinct from
all



all others, I once thought demonstrable from some reports concerning the Esquimaux. The author of the history of New France and several other writers report, that the Esquimaux are bold, mischievous, suspicious, and untamable; that it is not even safe to converse with them but at a distance; that no European skin is whiter; and that they are bearded up to the eyes. Supposing these facts to be true, had I not reason to believe, that the Esquimaux must have sprung from some nation in the north of Europe or Asia, tho' I could not pretend to say, whether the transmigration was by land or sea? From the same facts, however, I was forc'd to conclude, that the rest of the Americans could not have had the same origin; for if the Canadians or any other American nation were of Asiatic or European extraction, they must, like the Esquimaux, have had a beard and white skin to this day. But one cannot be too cautious in giving faith to odd or singular facts, reported of distant nations. It is discovered by later accounts more worthy of credit, that the foregoing description of the Esquimaux is false in every particular. Of all the northern nations, not excepting the Laplanders, the Esquimaux are of the smallest size, few of them exceeding four feet in height. They have heads extremely gross, feet and hands very small. That they are neither cruel nor suspicious, appears from what Ellis says in his account of a voyage *anno* 1747, for discovering a north-west passage, that they offered their wives to the English sailors, with expressions of satisfaction for being able to accommodate them. But what is the most to the present purpose; they are of a copper colour, like the other Americans, only a degree lighter, occasioned probably by the intense cold of their climate; and they are also altogether destitute of a beard. It is common indeed among them, to bring forward the hair of the head upon the face, for preserving it from flies, which rage in that country during summer; an ap-



pearance that probably has been mistaken by travellers for a beard.

It has been lately discovered, that the language of the Esquimaux is the same with that of the Greenlanders. A Danish missionary, who by some years residence in Greenland had acquired the language of that country, made a voyage with Commodore Palliser to Newfoundland ann. 1764. Meeting a company of about two hundred Esquimaux, he was agreeably surpris'd to hear the Greenland tongue. They received him kindly, and drew from him a promise to return the next year. And we are informed by Crantz, in his history of Greenland, that the same Danish missionary visited them the very next year, in company with the Rev. Mr Drachart. They agreed, that the difference between the Esquimaux language and that of Greenland was not greater than between the dialects of North and South Greenland, which differ not so much as the High and Low Dutch. Both nations call themselves *Innuit* or *Karalit*, and call the Europeans *Kablunet*. Their stature, features, manners, dress, tents, darts, and boats, are entirely the same. As the language of Greenland resembles not the language of Finland, Lapland, Norway, Tartary, nor that of the Samoides, it is evident, that neither the Esquimaux nor Greenlanders are a colony from any of the countries mentioned. Geographers begin now to conjecture, that Greenland is a part of the continent of North America, without intervention of any sea*. One thing is certain, that the Greenlanders resemble the North-Americans in every particular: they are of a copper colour, and have no beard; they are of a small size, like the Esquimaux, and have the same

* The Danes had a settlement in Greenland long before Columbus saw the West Indies. Would it not appear paradoxical to say, that America was discovered by the Danes long before the time of Columbus, and long before they knew that they had made the discovery?

language.



language. And thus I am obliged to abandon my favourite argument, for proving the Americans, the Esquimaux excepted, to be indigenous, and not indebted to the old world for their existence. At the same time, the other arguments urged above remain entire; and from what is now said a circumstance occurs, that fortifies greatly the chief of them. People, who with a bold face surmount all difficulties rather than give up a favourite opinion, make light of the copper colour and want of beard, willing to attribute all to the climate. We want *data*, I acknowledge, to determine with accuracy what effects can be produced by a climate. But luckily we have no occasion at present to determine that difficult point. It is sufficient that the climate of Labrador is much the same with that of the northern parts of Europe and Asia. From that circumstance I conclude with certainty, that the copper colour and want of beard in the Esquimaux cannot be the result of climate. And if so, what foundation can there be for making these circumstances depend on the climate in any other part of America? Truly none at all. I add, that as the copper colour and want of beard continue invariably the same in every variety of climate, hot and cold, moist and dry, they must depend on some invariable cause acting uniformly; which may be a singularity in the race of people (*a*), but cannot proceed from the climate.

If we can rely on the conjectures of an eminent writer (*b*), America emerged from the sea later than any other part of the known world: and supposing the human race to have been planted in America by the hand of God later than the days of Moses, Adam and Eve might have been the first parents of mankind, *i. e.* of all who at that time existed, without being the first parents of the Americans.

(*a*) Book 1. sketch 1.

(*b*) M. Buffon.



The *Terra Australis incognita* is separated from the rest of the world by a wide ocean, which carries a ship round the earth without interruption. How has that continent been peopled? There is not the slightest probability, that it ever has been joined to any other land. Here a local creation, if it may be termed so, appears unavoidable; and if we must admit more than one act of creation, even the appearance of difficulty, from reiteration of acts, totally vanisheth. M. Buffon, in his natural history, bears testimony, that not a single American quadruped of a hot climate is found in any other part of the earth: with respect to these we must unavoidably admit a local creation; and nothing seems more natural, than under the same act to comprehend the first parents of the American people.

It is possible, indeed, that a ship with men and women may, by contrary winds, be carried to a very distant shore. But to account thus for the peopling of America, will not be much relished: Mexico and Peru must have been planted before navigation was known in the old world, at least before a ship was brought to such perfection as to bear a long course of bad weather. Will it be thought, that any supposition ought to be embraced, however improbable, rather than admit a separate creation? We are, it is true, much in the dark as to the conduct of creative providence; but every rational conjecture leans to a separate creation. America and the *Terra Australis* must have been planted by the Almighty with a number of animals and vegetables, some of them peculiar to those vast continents: and when such care has been taken about inferior life, can so wild a thought be admitted, as that man, the noblest work of terrestrial creation, would be left to chance? But it is scarce necessary to insist upon this topic, as the external characters of the Americans above mentioned reject the supposition of their being descended from any people of the old world.

It



It is highly probable, that the fertile and delicious plains of Peru and Mexico were the first planted of all the American countries; being more populous at the time of the Spanish invasion than any other part of that great continent. This conjecture is supported by analogy: we believe that a spot, not central only, but extremely fertile, was chosen for the parents of the old world; and there is not in America a spot more central, or more fertile, than Mexico or Peru, for the parents of the new world.

Having thus ventured to throw out what occurred upon the origin of the Americans, without pretending to affirm any thing as certain, we proceed to their progress. The North-American tribes are remarkable with respect to one branch of their history, that, instead of advancing, like other nations, toward the maturity of society and government, they continue to this hour in their original state of hunting and fishing. A case so singular rouses our curiosity; and we wish to be made acquainted with the cause.

It is not the want of animals capable to be domesticated, that obliges them to remain hunters and fishers. The horse, it is true, the sheep, the goat, were imported from Europe; but there are plenty of American quadrupeds no less docile than those mentioned. There is, in particular, a species of horned cattle peculiar to America, having long wool instead of hair, and an excrescence upon the shoulder like that of the East-India buffalo. These wild cattle multiply exceedingly in the fertile countries which the Mississippi traverses; and Hennepin reports, that the Indians, after killing numbers, take no part away but the tongue, which is reckoned a delicious morsel. These creatures are not extremely wild; and, if taken young, are easily tamed: a calf, when its dam is killed, will follow the hunter, and lick his hand. The wool, the hide, the tallow, would be of great value in the British colonies.

If the shepherd-state be not obstructed in America by want of
proper



proper cattle, the only account that can or need be given is, paucity of inhabitants. Consider only the influence of custom, in rivetting men to their local situation and manner of life: once hunters, they will always be hunters, till some cause more potent than custom force them out of that state. Want of food, occasioned by rapid population, brought on the shepherd-state in the old world. That cause has not hitherto taken place in North America: the inhabitants, few in number, remain hunters and fishers, because that state affords them a competency of food. I am aware, that the natives have been decreasing in number from the time of the first European settlements. But even at that time the country was ill peopled: take for example the country above described, stretching north-west from the Mississippi: the Europeans never had any footing there, and yet to this day it is little better than a desert. I give other examples. The Indians who surround the lake Nippisong, from whence the river St Laurence issues, are in whole but five or six thousand; and yet their country is of great extent: they live by hunting and fishing, having bows and arrows, but no fire-arms; and their cloathing is the skins of beasts: they are seldom, if ever, engaged in war; have no commerce with any other people, Indian or European, but live as if they had a world to themselves (a). If that country be ill peopled, it is not from scarcity of food; for the country is extensive, and well stored with every sort of game. On the south and west of the lake Superior, the country is level and fruitful all the way to the Mississippi, having large plains covered with rank grass, and scarce a tree for hundreds of miles: the inhabitants enjoy the greatest plenty of fish, fowl, deer, &c.; and yet their numbers are far from being in proportion to their means of subsistence. In short, it is the conjecture of the ablest writers, that in the vast extent of North

(a) Account of North America by Major Robert Rogers.

America, when discovered, there were not as many people, laying aside Mexico, as in the half of Europe.

Paucity of inhabitants explains clearly why the North-American tribes remain hunters and fishers, without advancing to the shepherd-state. But if the foregoing difficulty be removed, another starts up, no less puzzling, viz. By what adverse fate are so rich countries so ill peopled? It is a conjecture of M. Buffon, mentioned above, that America has been planted later than the other parts of this globe. But supposing the fact, it has however not been planted so late as to prevent a great population, witness Mexico and Peru, fully peopled at the era of the Spanish invasion. We must therefore search for another cause; and none occurs but the infecundity of the North-American savages. M. Buffon, a respectable author, and for that reason often quoted, remarks, that these savages are feeble in their organs of generation, that they have no ardor for the female sex, and that they have few children; to enforce which remark he adds, that the quadrupeds of America, both native and transplanted, are of a diminutive size, compared with those of the old world. A woman never admits her husband, till the child she is nursing be three years old; and this led Frenchmen to go often astray from their Canadian wives. The case was reported by the priests to their superiors in France; but what order was taken has escaped my memory. Among the males, it is an inviolable law, to abstain from females while they are engaged in a military expedition. This is pregnant evidence of their frigidity; for among savages the authority of law, or of opinion, seldom prevails over any strong appetite: vain would be the attempt to restrain them from spirituous liquors, tho' much more debilitating. Neither is there any instance, of violence offered by any North-American savage, to European women taken captives in war.

Mexico and Peru, when conquered by the Spaniards, afforded

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to their numerous inhabitants the necessaries of life in profusion. Cotton was in plenty, more than sufficient for the cloathing needed in warm climates: Indian wheat was universal, and was cultivated without much labour. The natural wants of the inhabitants were thus supplied with very little trouble; and artificial wants had made no progress. But the present state of these countries is very different. The Indians have learned from their conquerors a multitude of artificial wants, good houses, variety of food, and rich cloaths, which must be imported, because not manufactured at home. They are prohibited from exercising any art or calling except agriculture, which scarce affords them necessaries; and this obliges a great proportion of them to live single. Even agriculture itself is cramped; for in most of the provinces there is a prohibition to plant vines or olives. In short, it is believed that the inhabitants who existed at the Spanish invasion are reduced to a fourth part. The savages also of North America who border on the European settlements are visibly diminishing. When the English settled in America, the five nations could raise 15,000 fighting men: at present they are not able to raise 2000. Upon the whole, it is computed by able writers, that the present inhabitants of America amount not to a twentieth part of those who existed when that continent was discovered by Columbus. This decay is ascribed to the intemperate use of spirits, and to the small-pox, both of them introduced by the Europeans*.

It

* In all the West-Indian colonies, the slaves continually decrease so as to need frequent recruits from Africa. "This decrease," says the author of a late account of Guiana, "is commonly attributed to oppression and hard labour; tho' with little reason, as the slaves are much more robust, healthy, and vigorous, than their masters. The true cause is, the commerce of white men with young negro wenches, who, to support that commerce, use every mean to avoid conception, and even to procure abortion. By such practices they are incapacitated to bear children"

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It is observable, that every sort of plague becomes more virulent when transplanted, than in its native place. The plague commits less ravage in Egypt, its native place, than in any other country. The venereal disease was for many ages more violent and destructive in Europe, than ever it was in America, where it was first known. The people who sailed with Christopher Columbus, brought it to Spain from Hispaniola. Columbus, with thirty or forty of his sailors, went directly to Barcelona, where the King then was, to render an account of his voyage. All the inhabitants, who at that time tripled the present number, were immediately seized with the venereal disease, which raged so furiously as to threaten destruction to all. The small pox comes under the same observation; for it has swept away many more in America, than ever it did in Europe. In the 1713, the crew of a Dutch vessel infected the Hottentots with the small pox; which left scarce a third of the inhabitants. And the same fate befel the Laplanders and Greenlanders. In all appearance, that disease, if it abate not soon of its transplanted virulence, will extirpate the natives of North America; for they know little of inoculation.

But spiritous liquors are a still more effectual cause of depopulation. The American savages, male and female, are inordinately fond of spiritous liquors; and savages generally abandon themselves to appetite, without the least control from shame. The noxious effects of intemperance in spirits, are too well known, from

“dren when they settle in marriage with their own countrymen. That this is the true cause, will be evident, from considering, that in Virginia and Maryland, the stock of slaves is kept up without any importation; because in these countries commerce with Negro women is detested, as infamous and unnatural.” The cause here assigned may have some effect: but there is a stronger cause of depopulation, viz. the culture of sugar, laborious in the field, and unhealthy in the house by boiling, &c. The Negroes employ’d in the culture of cotton, coffee, and ginger, seldom need to be recruited.



fatal experience among ourselves: before the use of gin was prohibited, the populace of London were debilitated by it to a degree of losing, in a great measure, the power of procreation. Happily for the human species, the invention of savages never reached the production of gin; for spirits in that early period would have left not one person alive, not a single Noah to restore the race of men: in order to accomplish the plan of Providence, creation must have been renewed oftener than once*.

In the temperate climates of the old world, there is great uniformity in the gradual progress of men from the savage state to the highest civilization; beginning with hunting and fishing, advancing to flocks and herds, and thereafter to agriculture and commerce. One would be much disappointed if he expected the same progress in America. Among the northern tribes, there is nothing that resembles the shepherd-state: they continue hunters and fishers as originally; because there is no cause so potent as to force them from that state to become shepherds. So far clear. But there is another fact of which we have no example in the old world, that seems not so easily explained: these people, without passing through the shepherd-state, have advanced to some degree of agriculture. Before the seventeenth century, the Iroquois, or five nations, had villages, and cultivated Indian corn: the Cherokees have many small towns; they raise corn in abundance, and fence in their fields: they breed poultry, and have orchards of peach-trees: the Chickesaws and Creek Indians live pretty much in the same manner. The Apalachites sow and reap in common;

* Charlevoix says, that an Indian of Canada will give all he is worth for a glass of brandy. And he paints thus the effect of drunkenness upon them. "Even in the streets of Montreal are seen the most shocking spectacles of ebriety; husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters, seizing one another by the throat, and tearing one another with their teeth, like so many enraged wolves."

and



and put up the corn in granaries, to be distributed among individuals when they want food. The Hurons raise great quantities of corn, not only for their own use, but for commerce. Many of these nations, particularly the Cherokees, have of late got horses, swine, and tame cattle; an improvement borrowed from the Europeans. But corn is of an earlier date: when Sir Richard Greenville took possession of Virginia in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the natives had corn; and Hennepin assures us, that the nations bordering on the Mississippi had corn long before they were visited by any European. Husbandry, it is true, is among those people still in its infancy; being left to the women, who sow, who reap, who store up in public granaries, and who distribute as need requires. The inhabitants of Guiana in South America, continue to this day hunters and fishers. But tho' they have neither flocks nor herds, they have some husbandry; for the women plant cassava, yams, and plantains. They make a liquor, like our ale, termed *pirwoore*, which they drink with their food. And tho' they are extremely fond of that liquor, their indolence makes them often neglect to provide against want. To a people having a violent propensity to intemperance, as all savages have, this improvidence is a blessing; for otherwise they would wallow in perpetual drunkenness. They are by no means singular; for unconcern about futurity is the characteristic of all savages. To forego an immediate for a distant enjoyment, can only be suggested by cultivated reason. When the Canary islands were first visited by the Europeans, which was in the fourteenth century, the inhabitants had corn; for which the ground was prepared in the following manner. They had a wooden instrument, not unlike a hoe, with a spur or tooth at the end, on which was fixed a goat's horn. With this instrument the ground was stirred; and if rain came not in its proper season, water was brought by canals from the rivulets. It was the women's province to reap the corn: they took only the ears; which



they threshed with sticks, or beat with their feet, and then winnowed in their hands. Husbandry probably will remain in its present state among American savages; for as they are decreasing daily, they can have no difficulty about food. The fact however is singular, of a people using corn before tame cattle: there must be a cause, which, on better acquaintance with that people, will probably be discovered.

America is full of political wonders. At the time of the Spanish invasion, the Mexicans and Peruvians had made great advances toward the perfection of society, while the northern tribes, separated from them by distance only, remained in the original state of hunters and fishers, and remain so at this day. To explain the difference, appears difficult. It is still more difficult to explain, why the Mexicans and Peruvians, inhabitants of the torrid zone, were highly polished in the arts of society and government; considering that in the old world, the inhabitants of the torrid zone are for the most part little better than savages. We are not sufficiently acquainted with the natural history of America, nor with that of its people, to attempt an explanation of these wonders: it is however part of our task, to state the progress of society among the Mexicans and Peruvians; which cannot fail to amuse the reader, as he will find these two nations differing essentially from the North-American tribes, in every article of manners, government, and police.

When the Spaniards invaded America, the Mexicans were skilful in agriculture. Maize was their chief grain, which, by careful culture, produced great plenty, even in the mountainous country of Tlascalla. They had gardening and botany, as well as agriculture: a physic-garden belonging to the Emperor was open to every one for gathering medicinal plants.

The art of cookery was far advanced among that people. Montezuma's table was generally covered with 200 dishes, many of them exquisitely

exquisitely dressed in the opinion even of the Spaniards. They used salt, which was made by the sun.

The women were dextrous at spinning; and manufactures of cotton and hair abounded every where.

The populousness of Mexico and Peru afford irrefragable evidence, that the arts of peace were there carried to a great height. The city of Mexico contained 60,000 families *; and Montezuma had thirty vassals who could bring into the field, each of them, 100,000 fighting men. Tlascalla, a neighbouring republic, governed by a senate, was so populous as to be almost a match for the Emperor of Mexico.

The public edifices in the city of Mexico, and houses of the nobility, were of stone, and well built. The royal palace had thirty gates opening to as many streets. The principal front was of jasper, black, red, and white, well polished. Three squares, built and adorned like the front, led to Montezuma's apartment, having large rooms, floors covered with mats of different kinds, walls hung with a mixture of cotton-cloth and rabbit-furs; the innermost room adorned with hangings of feathers, beautified with various figures in lively colours. In that building, large ceilings were formed so artificially without nails, as to make the planks sustain each other. Water was brought into the city of Mexico, from a mountain at a league's distance.

Gold and silver were in so high esteem, that vessels made of these metals were permitted to none but to the Emperor. Considering the value put upon gold and silver, the want of current coin would argue great dulness in that nation, if instances did

* We cannot altogether rely on what is reported of this ancient empire with respect to numbers. The city of Mexico, tho' considerably enlarged since the Spanish conquest, doth not at present contain more than 60,000 souls, including 20,000 Negroes and Mulattoes.



not daily occur of improvements, after being carried to a considerable height, stopping short at the very threshold of perfection. The want of current coin made fairs the more necessary, which were carried on with the most perfect regularity: judges on the spot decided mercantile differences; and inferior officers, making constant circuits, preserved peace and order. The abundance and variety of the commodities brought to market, and the order preserved by such multitudes, amazed the Spaniards; a spectacle deserving admiration, as a testimony of the grandeur and good government of that extensive empire.

The fine arts were not unknown in Mexico. Their goldsmiths were excellent workmen, particularly in moulding gold and silver into the form of animals. Their painters made landscapes and other imitations of nature with feathers, so artfully mixed as to bestow both life and colouring; of which sort of work, there were instances no less extraordinary for patience than for skill. Their drinking-cups were of the finest earth exquisitely made, differing from each other in colour, and even in smell. Of the same materials, they made great variety of vessels both for use and ornament.

They were not ignorant either of music or of poetry; and one of their capital amusements was songs set to music upon the achievements of their kings and ancestors.

With such a progress both in the useful and fine arts, is it not surprising, that tho' they had measures, they knew nothing of weights?

As to the art of writing, a capital article in the conduct of government, they were extremely deficient. That art, as mentioned above, was no farther advanced than the using figures composed of painted feathers, by which they made a shift to communicate some simple thoughts; and in that manner was Montezuma informed of the Spanish invasion.

There



There was great ingenuity shewn in regulating the calendar: the Mexican year was divided into 365 days; and into 18 months, containing 20 days each, which made 360; the remaining five intercalary days were added at the end of the year, for making it correspond to the course of the sun. They religiously employ'd these five days upon diversions, being of opinion that they were appropriated to that end by their ancestors.

Murder, theft, and corruption in officers of state, were capital crimes. Adultery also was capital; for female chastity was in high estimation. At the same time, consent was deemed a sufficient cause of divorce, the law leaving it to the parties concerned, who ought to be the best judges. In case of a divorce, the father took care of the male children, leaving the female children with the mother. But to prevent rash separations, it was capital for them to unite again.

It may be gathered from what has been said, that there was a distinction of rank among the Mexicans. So religiously was it observed, as to be display'd even in their buildings: the city of Mexico was divided into two parts, one appropriated to the Emperor and nobility, and one left to plebeians.

Education of children was an important article in the Mexican police. Public schools were allotted for plebeian children; and colleges well endowed for the sons of the nobility, where they continued till they were fit for business. The masters were considered as officers of state; not without reason, as their office was to qualify young men for serving their king and country. Such of the young nobles as made choice of a military life, were sent to the army, and made to suffer great hardships before they could be enlisted. They had indeed a powerful motive for perseverance, the most honourable of all employments being that of a soldier. Young women of quality were educated with no less care, by proper matrons chosen with the utmost circumspection.

As



As hereditary nobility, especially in an extensive empire, leads to monarchy, the government of Mexico was monarchical; and as the progress of monarchy is from being elective to be hereditary, Mexico had advanced no farther than to be an elective monarchy, of which Montezuma was the eleventh king. It would in time have become hereditary, had it not been subdued by the Spaniards. And it was an example of an elective monarchy that approaches the nearest to hereditary; for the power of election, as well as the privilege of being elected, were confined to the princes of the blood-royal. As a talent for war was chiefly regarded in chusing a successor to the throne, the Mexican kings always commanded their own armies. The Emperor-elect, before his coronation, was obliged to make some conquest, or perform some warlike exploit; a custom that supported the military spirit, and enlarged the kingdom. From every king was exacted a coronation-oath, to adhere to the religion of his ancestors, to maintain the laws and customs of the empire, and to be a father to his people.

The various affairs of government were distributed among different boards with great propriety. The management of the royal patrimony was allotted to one board; appeals from inferior tribunals, to another; the levying of troops, and the providing of magazines, to a third: matters of supreme importance were reserved to a council of state, held generally in the King's presence. These boards, all of them, were composed of men experienced in the arts of war and of peace: the council of state was composed of those who elected the Emperor.

Concerning the patrimony of the crown, mines of gold and silver belonged to the Emperor; and the duty on salt brought in a great revenue. But the capital duty was, a third of the land-rents, the estates of the nobles excepted; upon whom no tribute was imposed, but to serve in the army with a number of their vassals,
and

and to guard the Emperor's person. Goods manufactured and sold were subjected to a duty; which was not prejudicial to their manufactures, because there was no rival nation within reach.

Montezuma introduced a multitude of ceremonies into his court, tending to inspire veneration for his person; an excellent politic in rude times, of however little significancy among nations enlightened and rational. Veneration and humility were so much the tone of the court, that it was even thought indecent in the Mexican lords, to appear before the King in their richest habits. Vessels of gold and silver were appropriated to his table, and not permitted even to the princes of the blood. The table-cloths and napkins, made of the finest cotton, with the earthen ware, never made a second appearance at the Emperor's table, but were distributed among the servants.

In war, their offensive weapons were bows and arrows; and as iron was not known in America, their arrows were headed with bones sharpened at the point. They used also darts, and long wooden swords, in which were fixed sharp flints; and men of more than ordinary strength fought with clubs. They beside had slingers, who threw stones with great force and dexterity. Their defensive arms, used only by commanders and persons of distinction, were a coat of quilted cotton, a sort of breast-plate, and a shield of wood or tortoise-shell, adorned with plates of such metal as they could procure. The private men fought naked; their faces and bodies being deformed with paint, in order to terrify the enemy. They had warlike instruments of music, such as sea-shells, flutes made of large canes, and a sort of drum made of the trunk of a tree hollow'd. Their battalions consisted of great numbers crowded together, without even the appearance of order. They attacked with fury, and terrible outcries, in order to intimidate the enemy; a practice prompted by nature, and formerly used by many nations. It was not despised even by the Romans;



for Cato the elder was wont to say, that he had obtained more victories by the throats of his soldiers, than by their swords; and Cæsar applauds his own soldiers, above those of Pompey, for their warlike shouts. Eagerness to engage is vented in loud cries: and the effects are excellent: they redouble the ardor of those who attack, at the same time that they strike terror into the enemy.

Their armies were formed with ease: the princes of the empire, with the cacics or governors of provinces, were obliged to repair to the general rendezvous, each with his quota of men.

Their fortifications were trunks of large trees, fixed in the ground like pallisades, leaving no intervals but what were barely sufficient for discharging their arrows upon the enemy.

Military orders were instituted, with peculiar habits, as marks of distinction and honour; and each cavalier bore the device of his order, painted upon his robe, or fixed to it. Montezuma founded a new order of knighthood, into which princes only were admitted, or nobles descended from the royal stock; and as a token of its superiority, he became one of its members. The knights of that order had part of their hair bound with a red ribbon, to which a tassel was fixed hanging down to the shoulder. Every new exploit was honoured with an additional tassel; which made the knights with ardor embrace every opportunity to signalize themselves. As nothing can be better contrived than such a regulation for supporting a military spirit, the Mexicans would have been invincible had they understood the order of battle: for want of which that potent empire fell a prey to a handful of strangers. I differ from those who ascribe that event to the fire-arms of the Spaniards, and to their horses. These could not be more terrible to the Mexicans, than elephants were at first to the Romans: but familiarity with these unwieldy animals, restored to the Romans their wonted courage; and the Mexicans probably would
have

have behaved like the Romans, had they equalled the Romans in the art of war.

When that illustrious people, by their own genius, without borrowing from others, had made such proficiency in the arts of peace, as well as of war; is it not strange, that with respect to religion they were no better than savages? They not only practised human sacrifices, but dressed and eat the flesh of those that were sacrificed. Their great temple was contrived to raise horror: upon the walls were multiplied the figures of noxious serpents: the heads of persons sacrificed were stuck up in different places, and carefully renewed when wasted by time. There were eight temples in the city, nearly of the same architecture; 2000 of a smaller size, dedicated to different idols; scarce a street without a tutelary deity; nor a calamity that had not an altar, to which the distressed might have recourse for a remedy. Unparalleled ignorance and stupidity, obliged every Emperor, at his coronation, to swear, that there should be no unseasonable rains, no overflowing of rivers, no fields affected with sterility, nor any man hurt with the bad influences of the sun. In short, it was a slavish religion, built upon fear, not love. At the same time, they believed the immortality of the soul, and rewards and punishments in a future state; which made them bury with their dead, quantities of gold and silver, for defraying the expence of their journey; and also made them put to death some of their servants to attend them. Women sometimes, actuated with the same belief, were authors of their own death, in order to accompany their husbands.

The author that we must chiefly rely on for an account of Peru is Garcilasso de la Vega: tho' he may be justly suspected of partiality; for being of the Inca race, he bestows on the Peruvian government, improvements of later times. The articles that appear the least suspicious are what follow.

The principle of the Peruvian constitution seems to have been



an Agrarian law, of the strictest kind. To the sovereign was first allotted a large proportion of land, for defraying the expences of government; and the remainder was divided among his subjects, in proportion to the number of each family. These portions were not alienable: the sovereign was held proprietor of the whole, as in the feudal system; and from time to time the distribution was varied according to the circumstances of families. This Agrarian law contributed undoubtedly to the populousness of the kingdom of Peru.

It is a sure sign of improved agriculture, that aqueducts were made by the Peruvians for watering their land. Their plough was of wood, a yard long, flat before, round behind, and pointed at the end for piercing the ground. Agriculture seems to have been carried on by united labour: lands appropriated for maintaining the poor were first ploughed; next the portion allotted to soldiers performing duty in the field: then every man separately ploughed his own field; after which he assisted his neighbour: they proceeded to the portion of the curaca or lord: and lastly to the King's portion. In the month of March they reaped their maize, and celebrated the harvest with joy and feasting.

There being no artist nor manufacturer by profession, individuals were taught to do every thing for themselves. Every one knew how to plough and manure the land: every one was a carpenter, a mason, a shoemaker, a weaver, &c.; and the women were the most ingenious and diligent of all. Blas Valera mentions a law, named *the law of brotherhood*, which, without the prospect of reward, obliged them to be mutually aiding and assisting in ploughing, sowing, and reaping, in building their houses, and in every sort of occupation.

As the art was unknown of melting down metals by means of bellows, long copper pipes were contrived, contracted at the further

ther end, that the breath might act the more forcibly on the fire; and they used ten or twelve of these pipes together, when they wanted a very hot fire. Having no iron, their hatchets and pick-axes were of copper, and they had neither saw nor augre, nor any instrument of iron: ignorant of the use of nails, they tied their timber with cords of hemp. The tool they had for cutting stone, was a sharp flint; and with that tool they shaped the stone by continual rubbing, more than by cutting. Having no engines for raising stones, they did all by strength of arm. These defects notwithstanding, they erected great edifices; witness the fortrefs of Cusco, a stupendous fabric. It passes all understanding, by what means the stones, or rather the great rocks, employ'd in that building, were brought from the quarry. One of these stones, measured by Acofta, was thirty feet in length, eighteen in breadth, and six in thickness.

Having neither scissars nor needles of metal, they used a certain long thorn for a needle. The mirrors used by ladies of quality were of burnished copper: but such implements of dress were reckoned too effeminate for the men.

With respect to music, they had an instrument of hollow canes glew'd together, the notes of which were like those of an organ. They had love-songs accompanied with a pipe; and war-songs, which were their festival entertainment. They composed and acted comedies and tragedies. The art of writing properly so called, was unknown: but silken threads, with knots cast upon them of divers colours, enabled them to keep exact accounts, and to sum them up with a readiness that would have rivalled an expert European arithmetician. They had also attained to as much geometry as to measure their fields.

In war, their offensive arms were the bow and arrow, lance, dart, club, and bill. Their defensive arms, were the helmet and target.



target. The army was provided from the King's stores, and was no burden upon the people.

In philosophy, they had made no progress. An eclipse of the moon was attributed to her being sick; and they fancied the milky way to be a ewe giving suck to a lamb. With regard to the setting sun, they said, that he was a good swimmer, and that he pierced through the waves, to rise next morning in the east. But such ignorance is not wonderful; for no branch of science can make a progress without writing.

The people were divided into small bodies of ten families each: every division had a head, and a register was kept of the whole; a branch of public police, that very much resembles the English decennaries.

They made but two meals, one between eight and nine in the morning, the other before sunset. Idleness was punished with infamy: even children were employ'd according to their capacity. public visitors or monitors were appointed, having access to every house, for inspecting the manners of the inhabitants; who were rewarded or punished according to their behaviour. Moderation and industry were so effectually enforc'd by this article of police, that few were reduced to indigence; and these got their food and cloathing out of the King's stores.

With respect to their laws and customs, children were bound to serve their parents until the age of twenty-five; and marriage contracted before that time, without consent of parents, was null. Polygamy was prohibited, and persons were confined to marry within their own tribe. The tradition, that the Inca family were children of the sun, introduced incest among them; for it was a matter of religion to preserve their divine blood pure and unmixed.

It was the chief article of the Peruvian creed, upon which every other article of their religion depended, that the Inca family were

were



were children of their great god the sun, and sent by him to spread his worship and his laws among them. Nothing could have a greater influence upon an ignorant and credulous people, than such a doctrine. The sanctity of the Inca family was so deeply rooted in the hearts of the Peruvians, that no person of that family was thought capable of committing a crime. Such blind veneration for a family, makes it probable, that the government of Peru under the Incas had not subsisted many years; for a government founded upon deceit and superstition, cannot long continue its authority. However that be, such belief of the origin of the Incas, is evidence of great virtue and moderation in that family; for any gross act of tyranny or injustice, would have opened the eyes of the people to see their error. Moderation in the sovereign, and in the subjects obedience without reserve, cannot fail to produce a government mild and gentle; which was verified in that of Peru, so mild and gentle, that to manure and cultivate the lands of the Inca, and to lay up the produce in store-houses, were the only burdens imposed upon the people, if it was not sometimes to make cloaths and weapons for the army. At the same time their kings were so revered, that these articles of labour were performed with great alacrity.

The government was equally gentle with regard to punishments. Indeed very few crimes were committed, being considered as a sort of rebellion against their great god the sun. The only crime that seems to have been punished with severity, is the marauding of soldiers; for death was inflicted, however inconsiderable the damage.

In this empire, there appears to have been the most perfect union between law and religion; which could not fail to produce obedience, order, and tranquillity, among that people, tho' extremely numerous. The Inca family was fam'd for moderation: they made conquests in order to civilize their neighbours; and as they

they seldom if ever transgressed the bounds of morality, no other art was necessary to preserve the government entire, but to keep the people ignorant of true religion. They had virgins dedicated to the sun, who, like the vestal virgins in Rome, were under a vow of perpetual chastity.

This subject shall be concluded with some slight observations on the two governments I have been describing. Comparing them together, the Mexican government seems to have been supported by arms; that of Peru by religion.

The kings of Peru were hereditary and absolute: those of Mexico elective. In contradiction however to political principles, the government of Peru was by far the milder. It is mentioned above, that the electors of the Mexican kings were hereditary princes; and the same electors composed the great council of state. Montesquieu therefore has been misinformed when he terms this a despotic monarchy (*a*): a monarchy can never be despotic, where the sovereign is limited by a great council, the members of which are independent of him. As little reason has he to term Peru despotic. An absolute monarchy it was, but the farthest in the world from being despotic: on the contrary, we find not in history any government so well contrived for the good of the people. An Agrarian law, firmly rooted, prevented that great inequality of rank and riches which lead to luxury, and dissolution of manners: a commonwealth was naturally the result of such a constitution; and probably would have taken place, had it not been for a government no less suitable, and still more mild, viz. a theocracy under a family sent from heaven to make them happy. This wild opinion, supported by ignorance and superstition, proved an effectual bar against tyranny in the monarch; a most exemplary conduct on his part being necessary for supporting the o-

(*a*) L'Esprit des loix, liv. 17. ch. 2.

pinion



Sk. XII. AMERICAN NATIONS.

pinion of his divinity. Upon the whole, comprehending king and subject, there perhaps never existed more virtue in any other government, whether monarchical or republican.

In Peru there are traces of some distinction of ranks, arising probably from office merely, which, as in France, were a bulwark to the monarch against the peasants. The great superiority of the Peruvian Incas, as demi-gods, did not admit a hereditary nobility.

With respect to the progress of arts and manufactures, the two nations differed widely: in Mexico, arts and manufactures were carried to a surprising height, considering the tools they had to work with: in Peru, they had made no progress, every man, as among mere savages, providing the necessaries of life for himself. As the world goes at present, such numbers are employ'd upon our multiplied wants, that not above one of a hundred can be spared for war. In ancient times, when these wants were few, and not much enlarged beyond nature, it is computed that an eighth part could be spared for war: and hence the numerous armies we read of in the history of ancient nations. The Peruvians had it in their power to go still farther: it was possible to arm the whole males capable of service: leaving the women to supply the few necessaries that might be wanted during a short campaign; and accordingly we find that the Incas were great conquerors.

The religion of the Peruvians, considered in a political light, was excellent. The veneration they paid their sovereign upon a false religious principle, was their only superstition; and that superstition contributed greatly to improve their morals and their manners: on the other hand, the religion of Mexico was abominable.

Upon the whole, there never was a country destitute of iron, where arts seem to have been carried higher than in Mexico; and,



bating their religion, there never was a country destitute of writing, where government seems to have been more perfect. I except not the government of Peru, which, not being founded on political principles, but on superstition, might be more mild, but was far from being so solidly founded.

S K E T C H E S

