

Time & The Lost Moon

NEW VOYAGES TO North-America.

Giving a full Account of the Customs, Commerce, Religion, and strange Opinions of the Savages of that Country.

WITH

POLITICAL REMARKS upon the Courts of *Portugal* and *Denmark*, and the Present State of the Commerce of those Countries.

Never Printed before.

WRITTEN

By the Baron L A H O N T A N , Lord Lieutenant of the *French* Colony at *Placentia* in *Newfoundland* : *Now in England*.

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DISCOURSE OF THE Habit, Houses, Complexion and Temperament OF THE SAVAGES
OF NORTH-AMERICA.

THE *Grecian* Chronologers who divided the course of Time into three Periods...might have sav'd themselves the trouble of writing a Thousand idle Stories relating to the Original of the Inhabitants of the Earth ; for the invention of Writing being unknown to them before the Siege of *Troy*, they had no other Standard to consult but the Fabulous Manuscripts, of the *Egyptians* and *Chaldeans*, who were a Phanatick Superstitious sort of People. But supposing the *Egyptians* and *Chaldeans* to have invented the Art of Writing, what Credit can we give to the accounts of things that are said to have happened before the date of that Invention ? In all probability they knew no more of the matter than the *Americans*, and upon that score 'twas very hard for them to give a faithful Narrative of the Adventures and Exploits of their Ancestors. I am now fully convinced that Tradition is so inconstant, obscure, uncertain and fallacious, that we cann't pretend to rely upon it. And this Notion I owe to the Savages of *Canada*, who being at a loss to trace the truth of what has been transacted in their own Country but 200 Years ago, gave me occasion to call in Question the Purity and Truth of Tradition. Upon this lay you may easily apprehend, that these poor People are as little acquainted with their own History and Origin, as the *Greeks* and *Chaldeans* were with theirs. Let us therefore content ourselves, *my good Friend*, in believing that they are descended of honest old *Adam*, as well as you and I.

I have read some Histories of *Canada*, which were writ at several times by the Monks, and must own that they have given some plain and exact Descriptions of such Countries as they knew ; but at the same time they are widely mistaken in their Accounts of the Manners and Customs of the Savages. [1]

The Recollets brand the Savages for stupid, gross and rustick Persons, incapable of Thought or Reflection : But the Jesuits give them other sort of Language, for they intitle them to good Sense, to a tenacious Memory, and to a quick Apprehension season'd with a solid Judgment. The former allege that 'tis to no purpose to preach the Gospel to a sort of People that have less Knowledge than the Brutes. [2] On the other hand the latter (I mean the Jesuits) give it out, that these Savages take Pleasure in hearing the Word of God, and readily apprehend the meaning of the Scriptures. In the mean time, 'tis no difficult matter to point to the Reasons that influence the one and the other to such Allegations ; the Mystery is easily unravelled by those who know that these two Orders cannot set their Horses together in *Canada*. [3]

I have seen so many impertinent Accounts of this Country, and those written by Authors that pass'd for Saints ; that I now begin to believe, that all History is one continued Series of Pyrrhonism. [4] Had I been unacquainted with the Language of the Savages, I might have credited all that was said of them ; but the opportunity I had of Converting with that People, serv'd to undeceive me, and gave me to understand, that the Recollets and the Jesuits content themselves with glancing at things, without taking notice of the (almost) invincible Aversion of the Savages to the Truths of Christianity. Both the one and the other had good reason to be cautious of touching upon that String. In the mean time suffer me to acquaint you, that upon this Head I only speak of the Savages of *Canada*, excluding those that live beyond the River of *Missisipi*, of whose Manners and Customs I could not acquire a perfect Scheme, by reason that I was unacquainted with their Languages, not to mention that I had not time to make any long stay in their Country. In the Journal of my Voyage upon the long River, I acquainted you that they are a very polite People, which you will likewise infer from the Circumstances mention'd in that Discourse.

Those who have represented the Savages to be as rough as Bears, never had the opportunity of seeing them ; for they have neither Beard nor Hair in any part of their Body, not so much as under their Arm-pits. [5] This is true of both Sexes, if I may credit those who ought to know better than I. Generally they are proper well made Persons, and fitter Companions to *American* than to *European* Women. The *Iroquese* are of a larger Stature, and withal more Valiant and Cunning than the other Nations ; but at the same time they are neither so Nimble nor so Dexterous at the Exercises of War or Hunting, which they never go about but in great Numbers. The *Illinese*, the *Oumamis*, and the *Outagamins* ; with some other adjacent Nations, are of an indifferent size, and run like Greyhounds, if the Comparison be allowable. The *Outaouas*, and most of the other Savages to the *Northward*, (excepting the *Sauteurs* and the *Cliftinos*) are cowardly, ugly, and ungainly Fellows ; but the *Hurons* are a brave, active and daring People, resembling the *Iroquese* in their Stature and Countenance.

All the Savages are of a Sanguine Constitution, inclining to an Olive Colour, and generally speaking they have good Faces and proper Persons. 'Tis a great rarity to find any among them that are Lame, Hunch-back'd, One-ey'd, Blind, or Dumb. [6] Their Eyes are large and black as well as their Hair ; their Teeth are White like Ivory, and the Breath that springs from their Mouth in expiration is as pure as the Air that they suck in in Inspiration, notwithstanding they eat no Bread ; which shews that we are mistaken in Europe, in fancying that the eating of Meat without Bread makes one's breath stink. They are neither so strong nor so vigorous as most of the *French* are in raising of Weights with their Arms, or carrying of Burdens on their Backs ; but to make amends for that, they are indefatigable and inur'd to Hardships, insomuch that the Inconveniences of Cold or Heat have no impression upon them ; their whole time being spent in the way of Exercise, whether in running up and down at Hunting and Fishing, or in Dancing and playing at Foot-ball, or such Games as require the Motion of the Legs.

The Women are of an indifferent Stature, and as handsom in the Face as you can well imagine ; but then they are so fat, unwieldy and ill-built, that they'l scarce tempt any but Savages. Their Hair is rolled up behind with a sort of Ribband, and that Roller hangs down to their Girdle ; they never offer to cut their Hair during the whole Course of their Lives, whereas the Men cut theirs every Month. [7] Twere to be wished, that the same good luck which led them to the observation of this, had thrown them upon the other Advices of St. *Paul*. They are covered from the Neck to under the Knee, and always put their Legs a cross when they fit. The Girls do the same from their *Cradle* ; if the Word be not improper, for there is no such thing as a *Cradle* among the Savages. The Mothers make use of certain little Boards stuffed with Cotton, upon which the Children lye as if their Backs were glued to them, being swaddled in Linnen, and kept on with Swathbands run through the sides of the Boards. To these Boards they tye Strings, by which they hang their Children upon the Branches of Trees, when they are about any thing in the Woods. [8]

The old and the married Men have a piece of Stuff which covers them behind, and reaches half way down their Thighs before ; whereas the young Men are stark naked all over. They alledge that Nakedness is no infraction upon the Measures of Decency, any otherwise than as it is contrary to the Custom of the *Europeans*, and condemned by the Notion that they have of it. However, both the young and the old hang upon their Backs in a careless way a Covering of Hide or of Scarlet, when they go abroad to Walk or to make Visits. They have likewise a sort of Cloaks or Coats calculated for the Season, when they go a Hunting or upon Warlike Expeditions, in order to guard off the Cold in Winter, and the Flies in Summer. Upon such occasions they make use of a sort of Caps made in the form of a Hat, and Shooes of Elk or Hart Skins, which reach up to their mid-Leg. [9]

Their Villages are Fortified with double Palissadoes of very hard Wood, which are as thick as one's Thigh, and fifteen Foot high, with little Squares about the middle of the Courtines. Commonly their Huts or Cottages are Eighty Foot long, Twenty five or Thirty Foot deep, and Twenty Foot high. They are cover'd with the Bark of young Elms ; and have two Alcoves, one on the right Hand and the other on the left, being a Foot high and nine Foot broad, between which they make their Fires, there being vents made in the Roof for the Smoak. Upon the sides of the two Alcoves there are little Closets or Apartments in which the young Women or married Persons lye upon little Beds rais'd about a Foot from the Ground. To Conclude, one Hut contains three or four Families. [10]

The Savages are very Healthy, and unacquainted with an infinity of Diseases, that plague the *Europeans*, such as the *Palsey*, the *Dropsey*, the *Gout*, the *Phthisick*, the *Asthma*, the *Gravel*, and the *Stone* : But at the same time they are liable to the *Small-Pox*, and to *Pleurisies*. If a Man dies at the Age of Sixty Years, they think he dies young, for they commonly live to Eighty or an Hundred ; nay, I met with two that were turn'd of an Hundred several Years. [11] But there are some among them that do not live so long, because they voluntarily shorten their Lives by poysoning themselves, as I shall shew you elsewhere. In this Point they seem to join issue with *Zeno* and the *Stoicks*, who vindicate *Self-Murther* ; and from thence I conclude, that the *Americans* are as great Fools as these great Philosophers.

A short View of the Humors and Customs of the S A V A G E S.

THE *Savages* are utter Strangers to distinctions of Property, for what belongs to one is equally anothers. If any one of them be in danger at the Beaver Hunting the rest fly to his Assistance without being so much as ask'd. If his Fusee bursts they are ready to offer him their own. If any of his Children be kill'd or taken by the Enemy, he is presently furnish'd with as many

Slaves as he hath occasion for. Money is in use with none of them but those that are Christians, who live in the Suburbs of our Towns. The others will not touch or so much as look upon Silver, but give it the odious Name of the *French Serpent*. They'll tell you that amongst us the People Murther, Plunder, Defame, and betray one another, for Money, that the Husbands make Merchandize of their Wives, and the Mothers of their Daughters, for the Lucre of that Metal. They think it unaccountable that one Man should have more than another, and that the Rich mould have more Respect than the Poor. In short, they say, the name of Savages which we bestow upon them would fit our selves better, since there is nothing in our Actions that bears an appearance of Wisdom. Such as have been in *France* were continually teasing us with the Faults and Disorders they observ'd in our Towns, as being occasion'd by Money. 'Tis in vain to remonstrate to them how useful the Distinction of Property is for the support of a Society : They make a Jest of what's to be said on that Head. In fine, they neither Quarrel nor Fight, nor Slander one another. They scoff at Arts and Sciences, and laugh at the difference of Degrees which is observ'd with us. They brand us for Slaves, and call us miserable Souls, whose Life is not worth having, alledging, That we degrade our selves in subjecting our selves to one Man who possesses the whole Power, and is bound by no Law but his own Will ; That we have continual Jars among our selves ; that our Children rebel against their Parents ; that we Imprison one another, and publickly promote our own Destruction. Besides, they value themselves above any thing that you can imagine, and this is the reason they always give for't, *That one's as much Master as another, and since Men are all made of the same Clay there should be no Distinction or Superiority among them*. They pretend that their contented way of Living far surpasses our Riches ; That all our Sciences are not so valuable as the Art of leading a peaceful calm Life ; That a Man is not a Man with us any farther than Riches will make him ; but among them the true Qualifications of a Man are, to run well, to hunt, to bend the Bow and manage the Fuzee, to work a Cannoo, to understand War, to know Forrests, to subsist upon a little, to build Cottages, to fell Trees, and to be able to travel an hundred Leagues in a Wood without any Guide, or other Provision than his Bow and Arrows. They say, we are great Cheats in selling them, bad Wares four times dearer than they are worth, by way of Exchange for their Beaver-skins : That our Fuzees are continually bursting and laming them, after they have paid sufficient Prices for them. I wish I had time to recount the innumerable Absurdities they are guilty of relating to our Customs, but to be particular upon that Head would be a Work of Ten or Twelve Days.

Their Victuals are either Boild or roasted, and they lap great quantities of the Broath, both of Meat and of Fish : They cannot bear the taste of Salt or Spices, and wonder that we are able to live so long as thirty Years, considering our Wines, our Spices, and our Immoderate Use of Women. They dine generally Forty or Fifty in a Company, and somtimes above Three Hundred : Two Hours before they begin they employ themselves in Dancing, and each Man sings his Exploits, and those of his Ancestors ; they dance but one at a time, while the rest are set on the Ground, and mark the Cadence with an odd Tone, *He, He, He, He* ; after which every one rises and dances in his turn.

The Warriars attempt nothing without the Advice of the Council, which is composed of the Old Men of the Nation ; that is to say, such as are above Sixty : Before they are assembled a Cryer gives notice of it through all the Streets in the Village : Then these old Old Men run to a certain Cottage design'd for that purpose, where they seat themselves in a Square Figure; and after they have weighed what is proposed for the benefit of the Nation, the Speaker goes out of the Cottage, and the Young Men get about him, and listen with great attention to the Resolves of the Old ones, crying out at the end of every Sentence *That's Good*. [12]

All these Dances may be compared to Minerva's Pyrrhiche. For while the Savages dance with a Singular Gravity, they humour the Cadences of certain Songs, which Achilles's, Malitia called Hyperchematica. I am at a loss to inform you whether the Savages had these Songs from the Grecians, or the Grecians from the Savages. [13]

They have several sorts of Dances. The principal is that of the *Calumet* ; the rest are the Chiefs or Commanders Dance, the Warriors Dance, the Marriage Dance, and the Dance of the Sacrifice. They differ from one another both in the Cadence and in the Leaps ; but 'tis impossible to describe them, for that they have so little resemblance to ours. That of the *Calumet* is the most grave and handsome ; but they don't perform that but upon certain Occasions, viz. When Strangers pass through their Country, or when their Enemies send Ambassadors to treat of a Peace. If they approach to a Village by Land, when they're ready to enter, they depute one of this Number, who advances, and proclaims, that he brings the *Calumet of Peace* ; the rest stopping in the mean time, till he calls to them to come : Then some of the Young Men march out of the Village, at the Gate of which they form an Oval Figure, and when the Strangers are come up to them, they dance all at a time, forming a Second Oval round him that bears the *Calumet* : This Dance continues half an Hour. Then they receive the Travellers with some Ceremony, and conduct them to a Feast. The Ceremonies are the same to those that come by Water, with this difference, that they send a Canoo to the Foot of the Village, with the *Calumet of Peace*, upon its Prow, in the shape of a Mast, and one comes from the Village to meet 'em. [14] The Dance of War is done in a Circle, during which the Savages are seated on the Ground. He that dances moves from the Right Hand to the Left, singing in the mean time the Exploits of himself and his Ancestors. At the end of every Memorable Action, he gives a great Stroke with a Club upon a Stake plac'd in the middle of the Circle, near certain Players, who beat Time upon a sort of a Kettle-Drum ; Every one rises in his turn to sing his Song : And this is commonly practised when they go to War, or are come from it.

The greatest Passion of the Savages consists in the Implacable Hatred they bear to their Enemies ; that is, all Nations with whom they are at Open War : They value themselves mightily upon their Valour ; insomuch that they have scarce any regard to any thing else. One may say, That they are wholly governed by Temperament, and their Society is perfect Mechanism. They have neither Laws, Judges, nor Priests ; they are naturally inclin'd to Gravity, which makes them very circumspect in their Words and Actions. They observe a certain Medium between Gayety and Melancholy. The *French Air* they could not away with ; and there was none but the younger sort of them that approved of our Fashions.

I have seen Savages when they've come a great way, make no other Compliment to the Family than, *I am arriv'd, I wish all of you a great deal of Honour*. Then they take their Pipe quietly without asking any Questions : When that's done, they'l say, *Heark'e Friend, I am come from such a Place, I saw such a thing, &c.* When you ask a Question, their Answer is exceeding concise, unless they are Members of the Council ; otherwise you'll hear 'em say, *That's Good ; That signifies nought ; That's admirable ; That has Reason in it ; That's valiant.*

If you tell a Father of a Family that his Children have signaliz'd themselves against the Enemy, and have took several Slaves, his Answer is short, *That's Good*, without any farther Enquiry. If you tell him his Children are slain, he'll say immediately, *That signifies nought*, without asking how it happen'd ? When a Jesuit preaches to them the Truth of the Christian Religion, the Prophecies, Miracles, &c. they return you, a *That's wonderful*, and no more. When the French tell them of the Laws of a Kingdom ; the Justice, Manners and Customs of the *Europeans*, they'll repeat you a hundred times, *That's reasonable*. If you discourse them

upon an Enterprise of great importance, or that's difficult to execute, or which requires much thought, they'll say, *That's Valiant*, without explaining themselves, and will listen to the end of your Discourse with great attention : Yet 'tis to be observed, when they're with their Friends in private, they'll argue with as much boldness as those of the Council. 'Tis very strange, that having no advantage of Education, but being directed only by the Pure Light of Nature, they should be able to furnish Matter for a Conference which often lasts above three Hours, and which turns upon all manner of Things ; and should acquit themselves of it so well, that I never repented the time I spent with these truly Natural Philosophers.

When a Visit is paid to a Savage, at going in you must say, *I am come to see such an one* : Then Fathers, Mothers, Wives, Children go out, or withdraw themselves to an Apartment at one end of the Cottage, and be who you will, come not near you to interrupt your Conversation. The Fashion is for him that is visited, to offer you to eat, drink and smook ; and one may use an entire freedom with them, for they don't much mind Compliments. If one means to visit a Woman, the Ceremony's the same ; *I am come to see such an one* ; then every Body withdraws, and you tarry alone with her you come to see ; but you must not mention any thing Amorous in the Day time, as I shall inform you else where.

Nothing surpriz'd me more than to observe the Quarrels between their Children at play : A little after they are warm'd, they'll tell one another, *You have no Soul, You're wicked, You're treacherous* : In the mean time their Companions who make a Ring about them, hear all quietly, without taking one side or t'other till they fall to play again ; If by chance they come to Blows, the rest divide themselves into two Companies, and carry the Quarrellers home.

They are as ignorant of *Geography* as of other *Sciences*, and yet they draw the most exact Maps imaginable of the Countries they're acquainted with, for there's nothing wanting in them but the Longitude and Latitude of Places : They set down the True *North* according to the *Pole Star* ; The Ports, Harbours, Rivers, Creeks and Coasts, of the Lakes ; the Roads, Mountains, Woods, Marshes, Meadows, &c. counting the distances by Journeys and Half-journeys of the Warriors, and allowing to every Journey Five Leagues. These *Chorographical Maps* are drawn upon the Rind of your *Birch Tree* ; and when the Old Men hold a Council about War or Hunting, they're always sure to consult them. [15]

The Year of the *Outaonas*, the *Outagamis*, the *Hurons*, the *Sauteurs*, the *Illinois*, the *Oumamis*, and several other Savages, consists of Twelve-Synodical Lunar-Months, with this difference, when Thirty Moons are spent, they add one supernumerary Month to make it up, which they call the *Lost Moon*, and from thence begin their Account again, after the former Method. All these Months have very suitable Names ; for Instance; What we name March, they call the *Worm-Moon*, for then the Worms quit the Hollow Chops of the Trees where they shelter'd themselves in the Winter. *April* is call'd *the Month of Plants* ; *May* of *Flowers* and so of the others. I say, at the end of these Thirty Months, the next that follows is supernumerary, and not counted ; for Example ; We'll suppose the Month of *March* to be the Thirtieth Lunar-Month, and consequently, the Last of the *Epocha*. Next that should be counted the Month of *April* ; whereas the *Lost Moon* takes place of it, and must be over before they begin their Account again ; and this Month with the others, makes about a Year and an half. Because they have no Weeks, they reckon from the First till the Twenty Sixth of these sort of Months, and that contains just that space of time which is between the first appearance of the Moon at Night, till having finish'd its Course, it becomes almost invisible in the Morning ; and this they call the *Illumination-Month*. For Instance ; A Savage will say, *I went away the first of the Month of Sturgeons* (that's August), *and returned the Twenty-ninth of the Month of Indian-Corn* (the same with our *September*) ; *and next day*, (which is the last)

I rested my self. As for the remaining three Days and a half of the *Dead-Moon*, during which 'tis impossible to be discern'd, they give them the Name of the *Naked Days*. They make as little use of Hours as Weeks, having never got the way of making Clocks or Watches ; by the help of which little Instruments, they might divide the Natural Day into equal parts. [16] For this Reason, They are forc'd to reckon the Natural Day as well as the Night, by Quarters, Half, and Three-quarters, the Rising and the Setting-Sun, the Fore-noon and the Evening. As they have a wonderful Idea of any thing that depends upon the Attention of the Mind, and attain to an Exact Knowledge of many Things by Long Experience : To cross a Forest (for Instance) of a Hundred Leagues in a strait Line, without straying either to the Right or Left ; to follow the Tract of a Man or Beast upon the Grass or Leaves : So they know the Hour of the Day and Night exactly, even when it is so cloudy, that neither Sun nor Stars appear. I impute this Talent to a steady command of Mind, which is not natural to any but those whose Thoughts are as little distracted as these Mens are.

They are more surpriz'd to see some little Problemes of *Geometry* put in Practice, than we would be to see Water turn'd into Wine. They took my *Graphometer* for somewhat Divine, being unable to guess how we could know the distance of Places without measuring them by Cords or Rods, without there were some Supernatural Assistance. *Longimetry* pleas'd them far more than *Altimetry*, because they thought it more necessary to know the breadth of a River, than height of a Tree, &c. I remember one Day in a Village of the *Outaouas* at *Missilimakinac* a Slave brought into the Cottage where I was, a sort of Vessel made of a thick piece of soft Wood, which he had borrowed on purpose, in which he pretended to preserve Mapletree-Water. All the Savages which saw this Vessel, fell to arguing how much it would hold, and with that view call'd for a Pot, and for Water to determine the matter by Measuring. The humor took me to lay with them a Wager of a Treat, that I could tell the Quantity of Water that would fill it better than they. So that finding by my Computation, that it held about 248 Pots, or thereabouts, I went to make the Tryal, and made them not a little wonder that it fail'd but one or two Pots ; upon which I perswaded them, that the Pots that were wanting were suck'd up by the new Wood. [17] But what was most pleasant they were continually begging me to teach them *Stereometry*, that they might make use of it upon occasion : 'Twas to no purpose to tell them 'twas impossible they should understand it, tho' there were Reasons for't that might convince any body but Savages. They press'd me so much to't that I could not be quiet till I was forc'd to tell them, that no body could do it to Perfection but the Jesuits.

The Savages prefer your little Convex Glasses of two Inches Diemeter to any others, because they give but a faint Representation of the Pimples and Bloches upon their Faces. I remember that while I was at *Missilimakinac*, one of the Pedlers call'd *Coueurs de Bois*, brought a Convex Glass that was pretty large, and consequently represented the Face with some Deformity. All the Savages that saw this Piece of Catoptricks, thought it no less Miraculous than the awaker of a Clock, or a Magical Lanthern, or the Spring of a Machine. But what was most Comical, there was among the rest of the Spectators a *Huronese* Girl who told the Pedlar in a jocose way, That *if the Glass had the Vertue of Magnifying the Objects really, as it did in appearance, all her the Companions would give him in Exchange as many Beaver Skins as would make his Fortune.*

The Savages have the most happy Memory in the World. They can carry their Memory so far back, that when our Governors or their Deputies treated with them about War, Peace or Trade, and proposed things contrary to what was offer'd Thirty or Forty Years ago ; They reply, That the *French* are false, and change their Opinion every Hour, that 'tis so many Years since they said so and so ; and to confirm it bring you the Porcelain *Colier* that was given

them at that time. You remember I acquainted you in my Seventh Letter, that the Colters are the Symbols of Contracts, without which they conclude no Business of Moment.

They pay an infinite Deverence to Old Age. The Son that Laughs at his Father's Advice shall tremble before his Grandfather. In a Word, they take the Ancient Men for Oracles, and follow their Counsel accordingly. If a Man tell his Son 'tis time he should Marry, or go to the War, or the Hunting, or Shooting ! he shall answer carelessly, *That's Valiant, I thought so.* But if his Grandfather tell him so, the Answer is, *That's good, It shall he done.* If by chance they kill a Partridge, a Goose, or Duck, or catch any delicate Fish, they never fail to present it to their oldest Relations. [18]

The Savages are wholly free from Care ; they do nothing but Eat, Drink, Sleep, and ramble about in the Night when they are at their Villages. Having no set Hours for Meals, they Eat when they're hungry ; and commonly do it in a large Company, Feasting here and there by turns. The Women and Girls do the same among themselves, and don't admit any Men into their Company at that time. The Women Slaves are employed to Sow and Reap the *Indian-Corn* ; and the Men Slaves have for their Business the Hunting and Shooting where there is any Fatigue, tho' their Masters will very often help them. They have three sorts of Games. Their Game of Counters is purely Numerical, and he that can Add, Substract, Multiply and Divide best by these Counters is the Winner. This depends purely upon the Mind. Another Game which is Hazard and Chance, is perform'd with eight little Stones, which are Black on one side and White on the other. They're put on a Plate which they lay on the Ground, throwing the little Stones up in the Air, and if they fall so as to turn up the Black side 'tis good luck. The odd number wins, and eight Whites or Blacks wins double, but that happens but seldom. They have a third Play with a Ball not unlike our Tennis, but the Balls are very large, and the Rackets resemble ours, save that the Handle is at least three Foot long. The Savages, who commonly play at it in large Companies of three or four Hundred at a time, fix two Sticks at five or six Hundred Paces distance from each other ; They divide into two equal Parties, and toss up the Ball about half way between the two Sticks. Each Party endeavour to toss the Ball to their side ; some run to the Ball, and the rest keep at a little distance on both sides to assist on all Quarters. In fine this Game is so violent that they tear their Skins, and break their Legs very often in striving to raise the Ball. All these Games are made only for Feasts or other trifling Entertainments ; for 'tis to be observ'd, that as they hate Money, so they never put it in the Ballance, and one may say, *Interest is never the occasion of Debates among them.* [19]

'Tis not to be denied but the Savages are a very sensible People, and are perfectly well acquainted with the Interest of their Nations. They are great Moralists, especially when they Criticise on the Manners of the *Europeans*, and are mightily upon their Guard in our Company, unless it be with such as they are intimately acquainted with. In other Matters they are Incredulous and Obstinate to the last degree, and are not able to distinguish between a Chimerical Supposition and an undoubted Truth, or between a fair and a false Consequence, as you'l see in the insuing Chapter, which treats of their Belief, and in which I assure you you'l meet with very odd Notions.

The Belief of the Savages, and the Obstacles of their Conversion.

ALL the Savages are convinc'd that there must be a God, because they see nothing among Material Beings that subsists necessarily and by its own Nature. They prove the Existence of a Deity by the Frame of the Universe, which naturally leads us to a higher and Omnipotent Being, from whence it follows, say they, that Man was not made by chance, and that he's the Work of a Being superior in Wisdom and Knowledge, which they call the *Great Spirit*, or the

Master of Life, and which they Adore in the most abstracted and spiritual manner. They deliver their Thoughts of him thus, without any satisfactory Definition. The Existence of God being inseparable from his Essence, it contains every thing, it appears in every thing, acts in every thing, and gives motion to every thing. In fine, all that you see, all that you can conceive, is this Divinity which subsists without Bounds or Limits, and without Body ; and ought not to be represented under the Figure of an old Man, nor of any other thing, let it be never so fine or extensive. For this Reason they Adore him in every thing they see. When they see any thing that's fine or curious, especially when they look upon the Sun or Stars, they cry out, *O Great Spirit, we discern thee in every thing*. And in like manner when they reflect upon the meanest Trifles they acknowledge a Creator under the Name of the *Great Spirit* or *Master of Life*. [20]

I forgot to tell you that the Savages listen to all the Jesuits Preach to them without the least Contradiction. They content themselves to rail among one another at the Sermons the Fathers make at Church, and if a Savage talks freely to a *French*-man he must be fully assur'd of his Discretion and Friendship. I have been frequently much puzzled to answer their impertinent Objections, (for they can make no others in relation to Religion) but I still brought my self off by entreating them to give Ear to the Jesuits. To present you with a view of their Opinion relating to the Immortality of the Soul : They all believe it ; but not upon the plea that 'tis one simple substance, and that the Destruction of any Natural Being is accomplish'd by the separation of its Parts ; they're Strangers to that Argument. All they urge, is, that if the Soul were Mortal, all Men would be equally Happy in this Life ; for God being all Perfection and Wisdom, 'twould be inconsistent with his Nature to create some to be Happy and others to be Miserable. So they prove the Immortality of the Soul by the Hardships of Life to which most Men are expos'd, especially the best of People, when they are Kill'd, Tortur'd, made Prisoners, &c. For they pretend, that by a Conduct somewhat strange to our Apprehension, the Almighty orders a certain number of Creatures to suffer in this World, that they may be sav'd in the next ; and upon that score they cannot endure to hear the *Christians* say, Such a one has had the misfortune to be Kill'd, Wounded or made a Slave ; and look upon what we call a Misfortune to be only such in Fancy and *Idea*, since nothing comes to pass but by the Decrees of that infinitely perfect Being, whose Conduct cannot be Fantastical or Capricious, as they falsely pretend we *Christians* think it to be. On the contrary they think those Persons have very good Fortune who are Kill'd, Burnt or taken Prisoners. 'Tis the great unhappiness of these Poor, Blind People, that they will not suffer themselves to be instructed : For their Opinions are not in all respects contrary to the Light of the Gospel. They believe that God for Reasons above our reach makes use of the Sufferings of good People to display his Justice ; and in this Point we cannot oppose them, for 'tis one of the Principles of our own Religion : But when they alledge that we look upon the Divinity as a whimsical fantastick Being, are they not under the greateft mistake? The first and supreme cause must be suppos'd to make the wisest choice of means conducing to an end. If then 'tis true, as 'tis a Point of our Belief, that God does permit the Sufferings of the Innocent, 'tis our part to Adore his Wisdom, and not be so arrogant as to Censure it. One of the Savages that argued the Point with me, alledg'd that we represented the Divinity like a Man that had but a little Arm of the Sea to cross, and rather chose to take a turn of five or six Hundred Leagues about. This Quibble puzzled me a little : *For why*, says he, *since God can bring Men to Eternal Happiness by rewarding Vertue and Merit, why does not he go that shortest way to Work ? Why does he conduct a just Man to the Eternal Beatitude by the path of Sufferings ?* Thus 'tis that these poor Savages contradict themselves, and from hence it appears, that *Jesus Christ*, our Lord and Master, is the only Author of such Truths as support themselves, and contain not the least shadow of Contradiction. In a Word, the singular madness of this unfortunate People consists in denying their Assent to any thing but what's visible and probable. This is the standing and true Principle of their Religion, when you confider it abstractedly : But if you ask them in particular why they Adore God in the Sun, rather than in a Tree or a Mountain ; their Answer

is, That they choose to admire the Deity in publick by pointing to the most glorious thing that Nature affords. [21]

The Jesuits use their utmost Efforts to make them sensible of the Importance of Salvation. They explain to them the Holy Scriptures, and set forth the manner by which the Law of *Christ Jesus* took place in the World, and the change that it wrought. They lay before them the Prophecies, Revelations and Miracles, by which our Religion is inforc'd. But the poor Wretches are such obstinate Infidels, that all the Characters of Truth, Sincerity and Divinity that shine throughout the Scriptures, have no impression upon them. The greatest length that the good Fathers can bring them to, is to acquiesce after a Savage manner, contrary to what they think. For Instance, when the Jesuits Preach up the Incarnation of *Jesus Christ*, they'l answer, *That's Wonderful* : When the Question is put to them, whether they'll turn Christians, they reply, that *they'l consider of it*. If the secular *Europeans* sollicit them to come to Church to hear the Word of God, they reply, *'Tis reasonable* ; the meaning of which is, that they'l come ; but at the bottom they have no other design in approaching to the place of Worship, than to snatch away a Pipe of Tobacco, or to Ridicule the good Fathers, as I intimated above : For they have such happy Memories, that I knew ten of my own Acquaintance that had all the Holy Scriptures by Heart.

'Twill be worth your while to hear the thoughts of Reason that come from those People who pass for Beasts among us. They maintain, That a Man ought never to strip himself of the Privileges of Reason, that being the noblest Faculty with which God hath enrich'd him ; and That forasmuch as the Religion of the Christians is not put to the test of their Reason, it cannot be but that God ridicul'd them in enjoying them to consult their Reason in order to distinguish Good from Evil. Upon this score they affirm that Reason ought not to be controul'd by any Law, or put under a necessity of approving what it doth not comprehend ; and in fine, that what we call an Article of Faith is an intoxicating Potion to make Reason reel and stagger out of its way ; forsomuch as the pretended Faith may support Lies as well as the Truth, if we understand by it a readiness to believe without diving to the bottom of things. They pretend that if they had a mind to talk in the Language of the Christians, they might with equal right reject the Arguments proposed by the Christians against their Opinions, and plead that their Opinions are Incomprehensible Mysteries, and that we must not pretend to fathom the Secrets of the Almighty, which are plac'd so far above our weak reach.

'Tis in vain to remonstrate to them, That Reason gives only a faint and dazzling Light which leads those to a Precipice that trust to its Direction and Conduct : That 'tis a slave to Faith and ought to obey it blindly without disputing, just as an *Iroquese* Captive does his Master. 'Tis needless to represent to them, that the Holy Scriptures can contain nothing that's directly repugnant to right Reason. They make a jest of all such Remonstrances, for they imagine so great a Contradiction between the Scripture and Reason, that they think it impossible for the Advocates of the former to avoid the receiving of very dubious Opinions for certain and evident Truths. Their Prejudice proceeds from this, that they can't be convinc'd, that the Infallibility of the Scripture is to be made out by the Light of Reason. The Word Faith is enough to choak them ; they make a Jest of it, and alledge that the Writings of past Ages are false, supposititious and alter'd, upon the Plea that the Histories of our own times are justly liable to the same Censure. They plead, That a Man must be a Fool who believes that an Omnipotent Being, continued from all Eternity, in a state of Inactivity, and did not think of giving being to Creatures till within these five or six Thousand Years ; or that at that time God Created *Adam* on purpose to have him tempted by an evil Spirit to eat of an Apple, and that he occasion'd all the Misery of his Posterity by the pretended transmission of his Sin. They ridicule the Dialogue between Eve and the Serpent, alledging that we affront

God in supposing that he wrought the Miracle of giving this Animal the use of Speech, with intent to destroy all the Humane Race.

To continue their wild Remonstrances they say, ‘ ’Tis a thing unheard of, that for the expiation of *Adam’s* Sin God should put God to Death to satisfy himself ; That the Peace of the World should be brought about by the Incarnation of God and his shameful Death ; That his Disciples should be ignorant Men that fear’d to dye. This, they say, is still the more unaccountable, that the Sin of the first Father hath done more harm than the Death of the latter hath done good, the Apple having intail’d Death on all Men, whereas the Blood of *Jesus* hath not sav’d one half of them.’ They argue, ‘ That upon the Humanity of this God the Christians build a Religion without a Foundation, which is subject to the Changes and Vicissitudes of Humane Affairs. That this Religion being divided and subdivided into fo many Sects, as those of the *French*, the *English*, &c. it can be no other than an Human Artifice : For had God been the Author of it, his Providence had prevented such diversity of Sentiments by unambiguous Decisions. That if the Evangelical Law had descended from Heaven it had not contained those obscure Sayings that give rife to the Christian Dissensions ; for that God who foresees what is in the Womb of Futurity * would have deliver’d his Precepts in such clear and precise terms as would leave no room for Disputes.

‘ But supposing (continue they) that this Law descended from Heaven, which of the Christian Sects must we join with ? For we understand from an infinite number of Christians, that in some Communions we run the risque of Damnation.’ The great Article that they stickle most at is the *Incarnation of God*. They exclaim against the supposition that the Divine Word was shut up for nine Months in the Bowels of a Woman, and that the same God came to take up an Earthly Body in this World, and carry’d it up to his Seat of Bliss. Nay, they carry the thing farther, for they rally upon the unevenness and inconstancy of *Christ’s* Will. Tho’ he came into the World to dye, say they, yet it appears that he had no mind to it, and that he was affraid to Die. If the Divinity and Humanity had made but one Person, he would not have needed to pray or ask for any thing ; nay, supposing that his Divine Nature had not the Ascendant within him, yet he ought not to have fear’d Death, in regard that the loss of a Temporal Life is nothing to one that is affur’d of reviving for ever ; he knew for certain where he was a going, and consequently ought to have embraced Death more chearfully than we do, when we Poyson our selves in order to accompany our Relations to the Country of Souls.

They brand St. Paul for a Phantastical Man, alledging that he contradicts himself every Foot, and Reasons very sorrily. They Ridicule the Credulity of the Primitive Christians, whom they look upon as simple and superstitious Creatures ; and upon that Head take occasion to say, *That the Apostle Paul would have found a great deal of difficulty in perswading the People of Canada that he was ravish’d up to the third Heaven*. There’s one place of Scripture above all other that they can’t digest, viz. Many are called, but few chosen. Their Comment upon it is this, *God hath said, that many are call’d but few chosen, and what God says must needs be true. Now, if of three Men only one be sav’d, and the other two damn’d, then the Condition of a Stag is preferable to that of a Man ; Nay, put it upon an even lay, and let there be but one Man damned for one sav’d, even then the Stag hath the better of it*. This Objection was once put to me by the Rat, or the General of the Savages, when I was a Hunting with him. I reply’d, that we ought to indeavour to be in the number of the Chosen by following the Law and the Precepts of *Jesus Christ*. But my Answer did not satisfy him, for he still ran upon the great risque of two Men damn’d for one sav’d, and that by an immutable Decree. Upon that I refer’d him to the Jesuits, for I durst not tell him, That ’twas in his own Power to procure his Election : If I had, he had given me less Quarter than he did to *St. Paul* ; for in Religious Matters they always stick to Probability. This General was not so void of good Sense, but that he could think justly and make true Reflections upon Religious

Matters ; but he was so prepossess'd with an Opinion, that the Christian Faith was contrary to Reason, that all the Attempts I made could not convince him of the contrary. When I laid before him the Revelations of Moses and the Prophets, the universal Consent of almost all Nations in owning and acknowledging *Jesus Christ*, the Martyrdom of his Disciples and of the Primitive Christians, the perpetual Succession of our Sacred Oracles, the entire Destruction of the Jewish Republick, and the Destruction of *Jerusalem* foretold by our Saviour ; he ask'd me if my Father or my Grandfather had seen all these Events, and whether I was so credulous as to take our Scriptures for Truth, since the Histories of Countries writ but t'other Day are found to be Fabulous. He added, That the *Faith* which the Jesuits beat their Brains about imported no more than to be perswaded of a thing either by seeing it with their Eyes, or by finding it recommended by clear and solid Proofs ; That these Fathers and I were so far from con-vincing them of the truth of our Mysteries, that we only cover'd their Thoughts with Obscurity and Darkness.

Such, Sir, is the Obstinacy and prepoofflion of this People. I flatter my self that this short view of their Notions may divert you without Offence. I know that you are too well confirm'd and rivetted in our most Holy Faith, to receive any dangerous Impression from their impious Advances. I assure my self that you will joyn with me in bemoaning the deplorable state of these ignorant Wretches. Let us jointly admire the depth of the Divine Providence, which permits those Nations to entertain such an Aversion to our Divine Truths ; and in the mean time let us make the best use of the undeserv'd Advantage we have over them. Give me leave to acquaint you with the Reflections that these same Savages make upon our Conduct when they confine themselves to the Subject of Morality. *The Christians*, say they, *contemn the Precepts of the Son of God, they make a Jest of his Prohibitions, and doubt of the Sincerity of his Expressions ; for they counteract his Orders without intermission, and rob him of the Worship which he claims as his due, by paying it to Silver, to Beavers, and to their own Interest. They murmur against Heaven and him when things go cross with them ; they go about their usual Business on such Days as are set apart for Works of Piety and Devotion, and spend both that and the other parts of their time in Gaming, Drinking to excess, Fighting and Scolding. Instead of Comforting their Parents they leave them for a Sacrifice to Hunger and Misery, and not only deride their Counsel, but with impatiently for their Death. In the Night time, all of them, barring the Jesuits, roll from House to House to debauch the Women Savages. They Murther one another every Day upon the Plea of Theft or Affronts, or upon the score of Women ; they Pillage and Rob one another without any regard to the ties of Blood or Friendship, as often as they meet with an opportunity of doing it with impunity. They bespatter and defame one another with outrageous Calumnies ; and make no scruple to lye when they find 'twill serve their Interest. They are not satisfied with the Company of single Women, but debauch other Mens Wives ; and these Adulterous Women bring forth in the absence of their Husbands a spurious Off-spring, that are at a loss to know their Fathers. In fine, (continue they) though the Christians are so docile as to believe the Humanity of God, which is the most unreasonable Article that can be ; yet they seem to doubt of his Precepts, and incessantly transgress them, notwithstanding they are very pure and reasonable.* I should never come to an end, if I entered into the Particulars of their Savage way of Reasoning ; and for that reason 'twill be more proper to take leave of this Subject, and pass directly to the manner of Worship which they offer to their great Spirit or God, call'd *Kitchi Manitou*. A view of that will be more agreeable than the tedious Series of this sort of Philosophy, which at the bottom is but too true, and affords matter of Grief to all good Souls that are perswaded of the Truth of Christianity.

[1] The “ monkish histories” of Canada which Lahontan had probably seen, were : *Jesuit Relations*, of which forty volumes had been published yearly in Paris from 1632-73 ; Du Creux, *Historiæ Canadensis seu Novæ-Franciæ* (Paris, 1664), largely composed from the

- Relations* ; and Thévenot, *Receuil des Voyages Curieux* (Paris, 1681), containing Marquette's account of his discoveries. The Recollect historians were Sagard-Theodat, *Histoire du Canada et voyages que les frères mineurs Récollets y ont faits* (1636) ; Le Clercq, *Premier établissement de la foy dans la Nouvelle France* (Paris, 1691); Hennepin, *Description de la Louisiane* (Paris, 1683) ; *New Discovery* (London, 1698).—ED.
- [2] See Thwaites (ed.), *Hennepin's New Discovery*, p. 466, for an example of this allegation of the Recollects.—ED.
- [3] The rivalry between the two orders was nearly co-extensive with the history of New France, where the Recollects were first upon the field, but after 1632 were supplanted by the Jesuits. Talon re-introduced the Recollects to Canada in 1670, that they might act as a foil to the Jesuits. The former were supported by Frontenac and the governor's party in the colony, and accompanied La Salle upon his explorations. Lahontan means to intimate that the difference in the attitude of the two orders towards the savages, rested upon the varying success of their respective missions those of the Jesuits being large and flourishing, of the Recollects few and languishing.—ED.
- [4] Pyrrho was a Greek philosopher, founder of the school of absolute skepticism.—ED.
- [5] The Indians are not altogether beardless ; but, disliking the custom of wearing hair upon the face, pluck it out by the roots. See *Jesuit Relations*, i, p. 281 ; ii, p. 23, where Membertou, the Acadian chief, is spoken of as being bearded like a Frenchman.—ED.
- [6] On immunity from disease and deformity, consult *Jes. Rel.*, iii, p. 75.—ED.
- [7] On the various fashions of hair-dressing among the Indians, see *Jes. Rel.*, xlv, pp. 285, 287. A woman's hair was sometimes cut as a punishment for adultery.—ED.
- [8] For a good description of these Indian cradles, see Thwaites (ed.), *Early Western Travels*, ii, pp. 97, 98 ; Masson, *Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest* (Quebec, 1890), ii, pp. 322, 323.—ED.
- [9] Le Jeune gives in *Jes. Rel.*, vii, pp. 7-19, a good description of the various kinds of dress among the Canadian Indians at different seasons of the year.—ED.
- [10] The domestic architecture of the American aborigines varied with the tribe and their habitat. Lahontan had ranged from Newfoundland to Mackinac, if not farther, and it is a question which of the many classes of huts he had seen he is now describing. Probably he refers to those of the Huron, who then lived in settled villages both in the Mackinac district and near the French fort on Lake St. Clair. See Parkman, *Jesuits in North America*, pp. xxvi-xxviii. Upon the entire subject of Indian dwellings, consult Morgan, "Houses and House-Life of American Aborigines," United States Geological Survey, Contributions to Ethnology, 1881.—ED.
- [11] Early travellers obtained a mistaken notion of Indian longevity. Older chiefs, like many old men among the whites, took pride in their length of years and delighted in enlarging upon the facts. Modern observation proves that savages are the victims of their unsanitary life, and are subject to peculiar hardships and vicissitudes, hence die rather younger than white men.—ED.
- [12] The council is the most important institution of tribal life, and of indigenous growth. For a good description of forms of procedure, and the ceremonies connected therewith, see *Jes. Rel.*, x, pp. 251-263.—ED.
- [13] It is needless to say that there was no historical connection between Greek and North American dances and their accompanying songs, save as the development in these lines has a certain similarity among all primitive peoples. The pyrricha was a war dance of Doric origin, performed by men in armor ; while the hyporcheme (hyper-chematica), allied to the paean, was one variety of the song or cadence that accompanied the early Greek dances.—ED.
- [14] The classic description of the calumet dance is that of Marquette ; see *Jes. Rel.*, lix, pp. 129-137.—ED.
- [15] For a reproduction of an Indian map drawn by the savage Ochagach see Thwaites, *Rocky*

Mountain Exploration (New York, 1904), p. 28. Several others are in the atlas (vol. viii) to *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (New York, 1904).—ED.

- [16] This is a good account of the calendar of the primitive Indians, usually composed of thirteen lunar months. The aborigines of Central America, Mayas and Aztecs, had a more elaborate system. See Thomas, "Maya Calendar," in U. S. Bureau of Ethnology, *Bulletin* No. 18.—ED.
- [17] The pot is a French liquid measure equal to 3.29 English pints.—ED.
- [18] The evidence upon the deference paid by Indians to old age, is conflicting. The opinions of an elderly chief had especial weight in council ; but on the other hand aged people, when infirm, were frequently abandoned or put to death as a useless burden. See *Jes. Rel.*, xx, p. 239 ; also *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, index.—ED.
- [19] Lahontan appears to intimate that the Indians do not gamble for gain ; nevertheless, it is well-known that this is one of their strongest passions. The game of ball here described is that known as lacrosse, a modification of which is the present Canadian national game. For description see Thwaites (ed.), "J. Long's Voyages," in *Early Western Travels*, ii, pp. 89, 90.—ED.
- [20] The religious beliefs and mythologic development of the North American Indian have been much discussed, and but little determined. The evidence of Lahontan is valuable because the Indians with whom he associated were but slightly changed by contact with the European missionaries, and because his own materialistic, skeptical bent of mind divested him of certain preconceptions, and rendered his observation more accurate. His account of the spiritism of the Algonquians corresponds with the latest scientific conclusions as to the mythologic stage attained by the aborigines that it was neither monotheistic nor pantheistic, but recognized all manifestations of the unseen, yet without sense of personal unity. See Powell, "Mythology of North American Indians," in U. S. Bur. of Eth. Report, 1879-80, pp. 17-56 ; Brinton, *Myths of the New World* (3d ed., Phila., 1896) ; Dorman, *Origin of Primitive Superstitions among the Aborigines of America* (Phila., 1881).—ED.
- [21] This is in accord with modern conclusions, that the North Americans did not worship the sun, save as a symbol. The fashion of a decade or more ago, to explain most myths as solar in origin, is not to-day held sufficient.—ED.

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