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THE
PHILOSOPHICAL MAGAZINE.

I. *A Statistical Account of Upper Canada.* By
J. B. GALT, Esq.*

OF a country so little known as America, it is almost impossible to receive a description of any part without being sensible of an increase of knowledge. Our small stock of facts relative to its aboriginal inhabitants, and the frame of its permanent features, is still insufficient for correct theoretical purposes. We are still unable to conceive how it could have happened that a continent so extensive, equal in the variety of its productions and climates to the old world, should have been found, in the sixteenth century of the Christian æra, more savage and illiterate than those kingdoms of Asia and Africa which many ages before had relapsed into barbarism: and still less are we qualified to form a just hypothesis of those convulsions and events of nature which have given to the American scenery its peculiar magnificence. The French traveller Volney endeavours to prove that the southern interior of North America has only recently become dry, and that in time the lakes of Canada must also be exhausted, and lay open the bosom of the country †. But as the object of this paper is chiefly to give an arranged view of a few statistical recollections which were lately obtained from Mr. Gilkison, of Amherstburgh, in Upper Canada, it is perhaps superfluous to introduce reflections which more properly belong to the general questions of natural philosophy.

Climate.—The climate of Upper Canada is more steady

* Communicated by Mr. Galt.

† Volney's Travels in America.

than that of England. After winter has set in, which happens about Christmas, an intense frost usually prevails three months, during which the rigour of the season is unremit- ted. Towards the end of March the cold has relented, but vegetation does not effectually commence till the end of April; it proceeds then, however, with great power. Pease, in the course of six weeks after planting, are generally fit for table. Mr. Gilkison describes the summer as hotter than he ever felt it either in the south of England or the north of France; and during the dog days more oppressive than the heat of Jamaica.

Winds.—From the beginning of June to the end of Au- gust the wind on the lakes continues westerly during the day, and in the evening it becomes southerly. From what cause this resemblance to the alternate sea and land breezes of the West Indies originates Mr. Gilkison has not attempt- ed to ascertain; but he has observed that on the lakes Huron and Superior, which are less oblong than Erie and Ontario, the wind is more variable, and when westerly is accompa- nied with thick fogs. As the season advances, the regular day and night breezes of the lakes subside, and when the cold weather begins the course of the wind becomes as pre- carious as in other high latitudes.

Diseases.—The province of Upper Canada is not subject to any particular disease. Although the western district has in part been settled more than a century, the small-pox has never reached it. Vaccination has lately been introduced, and all ages have received it. Since the establishment of distilleries the people have become much addicted to drink- ing, which they pretend to say has reduced the frequency of the ague, with which they were formerly often afflicted. The clearing of the country, however, will probably more rationally account for the change.

Curiosities.—Petrifactions are very common; indeed the whole flat rock in the neighbourhood of Fort Erie ap- pears to be one petrified mass, for at every step something is seen which at one time has been either animal or vege- table substance. Mr. Gilkison saw in a gentleman's pos- session, some years ago, a petrified hand entire, except the
second

second joint of the fore finger, which seemed to have been accidentally broken off. The traders on the river St. Peter's, Mississippi, report that some of them have seen in the possession of the Indians a petrified child, which they have often wished to purchase; but the savages regard it as a deity, and no inducement could bribe them to part with it. Besides the natural curiosities there are others of a description more calculated to excite interest and reflection. These are the ruins of antient fortresses, which appear to have been the work of a race different from the present Indians, who possess no tradition concerning their origin, nor seem to entertain any opinion respecting their use, or of those by whom they were constructed. They are regularly formed, and generally built where a ravine or high bank naturally strengthens the one side. The walls are of earth, and at present may be about four or five feet in height. At one time they must have been much higher, for trees of the very largest size are now growing on the mounds. A continued barrier of these works extends from the northern side of Lake Ontario towards the river district, and across to the vast plains which reach to the Mississippi. It may also be mentioned in this place as rather a curious fact, that although Lower Canada is greatly infested with rats, none have ever been seen above the falls of Niagara.

Lakes.—The great lakes have been long gradually decreasing; and in the course of nine years, the period of Mr. Gilkison's residence at Amherstburgh, the waters have fallen nearly two feet perpendicularly. As the discharge at Niagara must in consequence be reduced, the allegations of those travellers respecting the time requisite for wearing the passage of the river there, cannot be correctly founded. It is highly probable that the discharge of the cataract was formerly much greater than it is at present, and the force of the water in mouldering the rock of course more effectual. The long period which in the opinion of those travellers the waters must have taken to form the chasm at the falls, is therefore at least doubtful. The issue from Lake Superior and the upper lakes into Ontario, independent of local streams and springs, is much greater than the discharge at

and naturalists have heard with surprise that the plant *cassia*, which grows only on the banks of Lake Ontario, is frequently found floating along the coasts of Norway*.

Hemp.—The cultivation of hemp in the Canadas has lately become a popular concern; and government, as well as public societies, have endeavoured to promote it, both as a resource to the navy and as an object of beneficial industry. In Upper Canada the sowing begins on the 10th of June, and in a favourable season ten hundred weight is generally produced per acre. About the middle of September it is pulled, the stalks are tied up in bundles, and steeped a few days in the river; they are then dried and stacked, till the farmers have leisure to break. It has been observed that steeping hemp in stagnated water is better than in running, besides being exposed to less hazard; the farmers, in consequence, intend to form steeping-pits in their hemp-grounds. At one time they used to rot the stalks upon the snow during winter; but it was soon ascertained to be destructive of the fibre, and has been universally renounced. The common hand-break is used in breaking the stalks, which are afterwards scotched with a kind of wooden sword. The hemp is held in the left hand over a perpendicular board, and the sword is used by the right; when this process is finished the hemp is bundled for market. It is unnecessary to remark how laborious this method of cleaning is! About the value of a dollar is allowed for every sixty pounds, or per day, to the labourer; a charge that will prevent the Canadian hemp from ever rivalling the Russian, for in Russia the price of labour is comparatively nothing. The establishment of machinery in aid of manual labour is probably, therefore, the only effectual mode of accomplishing the wishes of government, and of those patriotic associations who have patronized the cultivation of hemp in the Canadas. Government has offered fifty pounds sterling per ton for clean marketable hemp, delivered to agents in the county towns; but this plan, as well as the offer of bounties formerly adopted, has been almost entirely abortive, chiefly

* Darwin's Botanic Garden. Notes to the Loves of the Plants.

owing to the price and hard labour of breaking. Indeed, the culture of hemp would have been probably disused entirely, but for a ropework established at Amherstburgh by Mr. Gilkison in conjunction with a Mr. Mills, where the farmers, on allowing a certain deduction of price for the additional labour requisite to fit their hemp for use, have lately found a steady and regular market. To obviate the laborious process of the hand-break and scotching, Mr. Gilkison has procured the model of a flax-mill, from which he intends to erect, on a large scale, a mill for breaking and cleaning hemp at Amherstburgh. The price of cordage at the ropework, which can only yet be regarded as an experiment, is still high, about five guineas per cwt.; but this is as much owing to the price of tar as to the hemp or labour, for tar from the United States costs about three pounds sterling per barrel. In time, however, if the experiment succeed, tar will be made from the pines of the country, and the necessity of importation obviated.

Miscellaneous Considerations.--There are no historical facts more valuable than those which relate to the formation of communities, and the origin of nations; nor, perhaps, are the narratives of conquerors more interesting than the plain tales of those who, by the virtue of their designs alone, have improved the condition of mankind. The merits of William Penn have long been justly venerated; and the high moral character of the Pennsylvanians even at this day, in the United States, is the fairest monument that wisdom and enterprise can hope to obtain. The earl of Selkirk's exertions to provide for "a gallant and hardy race of men*," whom a coercive change of manners and the abolition of antient customs had deprived of their homes and hereditary importance, will also be commemorated with respect, when the derision with which they have been treated is forgotten, and the opposition which distorted his original design is remembered only to be contemned. His lordship's lands in Upper Canada were granted, like the other townships, on condition

* Lord Chatham's description of the Highlanders.

that within a limited period they should be settled with inhabitants; a principle calculated to excite that very spirit of emigration in others for which his lordship has been so inconsiderately blamed, and which he only endeavoured to regulate for ultimate benefit to the empire. He has built a village for the Highlanders, and they are now very comfortably established. Soon after their arrival a disorder similar to the jail fever broke out among them, and carried off a considerable number; they have since, however, participated in the general healthiness of the climate. His lordship, by importing Spanish and English rams, has improved the breed of his sheep; and he has already obtained wool equal to the best English, in some instances perhaps a superior quality. At no very distant period we may therefore presume that Canadian wool, as well as hemp, will become a staple article of commerce.

The use of tobacco has considerably abated in Europe, and perhaps universally; but as in many situations it is found a salutary and preventive medicine, it is likely to continue still a respectable branch of American commerce. It grows luxuriantly in the western district, and may therefore be regarded as one of those productions which in time will constitute the principal exportable commodities of the province. It is also probable that Canadian wines will be added to the variety of European luxuries; for the vine throughout the whole country is surprisingly fruitful, and the grapes uncommonly delicious. The mineral riches of Upper Canada are little known, nor has it ever been supposed that the precious metals were to be found there. Accident, however, has led Mr. Gilkison to believe, that, if judicious investigations were instituted, gold might be discovered in the country beyond the Lakes. One day an Indian brought to him a quantity of a very heavy substance resembling the filings of a metal, and which he, as well as those to whom it was shown, conceived to be gold. Mr. Gilkison brought this specimen with him for the purpose of ascertaining its value; but it was lost along with luggage in the shipwreck of the vessel by which he came to Britain. The Indian as-

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ured him the dust could be obtained in great abundance, and that next year he would return to Amherstburgh with a larger quantity.

A society has been formed for the encouragement of the commerce and agriculture of the province; and the legislature, last year, voted 400*l.* to procure a philosophical apparatus, to be placed in the most populous and central district; a grant of 1200*l.* was also made for the improvement and making of roads. When it is considered that the population does not exceed 40,000 souls, so liberal a disposition in the provincial legislature is certainly calculated to improve the character of the people, who may be described, at present, as a composition of all nations, kindred, and tongues. The Dutch farmers are eminently distinguished for their industrious inclinations, but the settlers from the United States are the refuse of their own country; they are nevertheless, however, excellent axe-men, and wonderfully active in clearing the forests. The French of Upper Canada are an indolent and thoughtless race; their attention is only exerted towards objects of amusement, and they appear but slightly affected by that kind of ambition which incites the rest of mankind to improve their condition. The Scotch Highlanders can hardly yet be regarded in any respect different from their well known character in Britain.

Religion.—The established religious discipline of Upper Canada is that of the English church. The clergy are governed by the bishop of Quebec. Their salaries, however, are paid by the state, as the lands allotted for ecclesiastical purposes are still inadequate to support them. By this mode of paying the clergy, those parochial feuds, which so often disgrace the priesthood elsewhere, are prevented. Exclusive of the allowance from government, the Missionary Society gives a small stipend, which makes the amount of the salary to each minister about 200*l.* per annum. It would be improper to dismiss this article without noticing a very extraordinary innovation on the tything system, which has been made by the British government. Instead of the tenth of the produce, a tenth part of the land in every allotment is reserved

reserved for the future maintenance of the clergy. But no provision is made for a capital to stock or cultivate the *tything*. The innovation seems only calculated to perplex the future pastors as well as their flocks, unless the legislature previously examine the validity of tythes in general.

Schools.—Several attempts have been made to establish township schools; the want, however, of funds has hitherto proved an insuperable objection. Lands, upon the same principle as the ecclesiastical, have been reserved for this purpose; but while the population of the country continues so thin, such local provision for the master will not be sufficient. There is reason to hope, however, that district schools will soon be instituted, when, besides fees from the scholars, it is supposed that salaries will be granted from the revenues of the province.

Missionaries.—The Missionary Society of the United States have sent their agents amongst the Indians; but, with the exception of the Quakers, few have succeeded in producing even a disposition to moral or intellectual improvement. In only one village, Mr. Gilkison said, had their labours been attended with any visible success. It is situated on the river Thames in the western district, and the Indians are of the Delaware nation. Several of the inhabitants read, and also write a little; they attend church regularly, where sermons in their own and the English language are delivered on Sundays. The women sing the psalms and hymns with a respectable degree of skill, and drinking is almost universally abandoned; which is the grand previous step to furnishing the Indians with the means of the matter of knowledge.