

hell. After most of those who had been invited to this pleasant Festival had sung, the Chief of the Feast, who had given the dance, sang a second time; and he said at the end of his song (which he improvised) that he was going to Montreal with the Frenchmen, and was on that account offering these Prayers to their God, entreating him to be propitious to him on the Voyage, and to render him acceptable to the French Nation. The young men who had taken off the kettles filled all the dishes with food, while the three Chanters repeated their first songs, not finishing their concert until everything had been eaten—a feat which did not take long to accomplish. An Old Man arose and congratulated, in the most affable manner, the Chief of the Feast on the project which he had formed, and encouraged the young men to follow him. All those who wished to go on the Voyage laid down a stick; there were enough people to man thirty Canoes. At the Sault, they joined seventy other Canoes, of various Nations, all of whom formed a single fleet.—La Potherie's *Amér. Septentrionale*, ii, pp. 85-118.

1665-67: RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND SUPERSTITIONS OF THE
UPPER ALGONKIN TRIBES.

[From the Jesuit *Relation* of 1666-67.]

Following is what Father Allouez relates concerning the customs of the Outaouacs and other peoples, which he has studied very carefully—not trusting the accounts given him by others, but having been himself an eye-witness and observer of everything described in this manuscript.

“There is here,” he says, “a false and abominable religion, resembling in many respects the faiths of some of the ancient Pagans. The Savages of these regions recognize no sovereign master of Heaven and Earth, but believe there are many genii—some of which are beneficent, as the Sun, the Moon, the Lake, Rivers, and Woods; others malevolent, as the adder, the dragon, cold, and storms. And, in general, whatever seems to them

either helpful or hurtful they call a Manitou, and pay it the worship and veneration which we render only to the true God.

"These divinities they invoke whenever they go out hunting, fishing, to war, or on a journey—offering them sacrifices, with ceremonies appropriate only for Sacrificial priests.

"One of the leading old men of the Village discharges the function of Priest, beginning with a carefully-prepared harangue addressed to the Sun—if the eat-all feast, which bears a certain resemblance to a holocaust, is held in its honor. He declares in a loud voice that he pays his thanks to that Luminary for having lighted him so that he could successfully kill some animal or other,—praying and exhorting it by this feast to continue its kind care of his family. During this invocation, all the Guests eat, even to the last morsel; after which a man appointed for the purpose takes a cake of tobacco, breaks it in two, and throws it into the fire. Every one cries aloud while the tobacco burns and the smoke rises aloft; and with these outcries the whole sacrifice ends."

"I have seen," continues the Father, "an Idol set up in the middle of a Village; and to it, among other presents, ten dogs were offered in sacrifice, in order to prevail on this false god to send elsewhere the distemper that was depopulating the Village. Every one went daily to make his offerings to this Idol, according to his needs.

"Besides these public sacrifices, they have some that are private and domestic; for often in their cabins they throw tobacco into the fire, with a kind of outward offering which they make to their false gods.

"During storms and tempests, they sacrifice a dog, throwing it into the Lake. 'That is to appease thee,' they say to the latter; 'keep quiet.' At perilous places in the Rivers, they propitiate the eddies and rapids by offering them presents; and so persuaded are they that they honor their pretended divinities by this external worship, that those among them who are converted and baptized observe the same ceremonies toward the true God, until they are disabused.

"As, moreover, these people are of gross nature, they recognize no purely spiritual divinity, believing that the Sun is a

man, and the Moon is his wife; that snow and ice are also a man, who goes away in the spring and comes back in the winter; that the evil spirit is in adders, dragons, and other monsters; that the crow, the kite, and some other birds are genii, and speak just as we do; and that there are even people among them who understand the language of birds, as some understand a little that of the French.

"They believe, moreover, that the souls of the Departed govern the fishes in the Lake; and thus, from the earliest times, they have held the immortality, and even the metempsychosis, of the souls of dead fishes, believing that they pass into other fishes' bodies. Therefore they never throw their bones into the fire, for fear that they may offend these souls, so that they will cease to come into their nets.

"They hold in very special veneration a certain fabulous animal which they have never seen except in dreams, and which they call Missibizi, acknowledging it to be a great genius, and offering it sacrifices in order to obtain good sturgeon-fishing.

"They say also that the little pebbles of copper which they find at the bottom of the water in the Lake, or in the Rivers emptying into it, are the riches of the gods who dwell in the depths of the earth.

"I have learned," says the Father who has brought to light all these follies, "that the Iliniouek, the Outagami, and other Savages toward the South, hold that there is a great and excellent genius, master of all the rest, who made Heaven and Earth; and who dwells, they say, in the East, toward the country of the French.

"The fountain-head of their Religion is libertinism; and all these various sacrifices end ordinarily in debauches, indecent dances, and shameful acts of concubinage. All the devotion of the men is directed toward securing many wives, and changing them whenever they choose; that of the women toward leaving their husbands; and that of the girls, toward a life of profligacy.

"They endure a great deal on account of these ridiculous deities; for they fast in their honor, for the purpose of learning the issue of some affair. I have," says the Father, "seen with

compassion men who had some scheme of war or hunting pass a whole week, taking scarcely anything. They show such fixity of purpose that they will not desist until they have seen in a dream what they desire,—either a herd of moose, or a band of Iroquois put to flight, or something similar,—no very difficult thing for an empty brain, utterly exhausted with hunger, and thinking all day of nothing else.

“Let us say something about the art of Medicine in vogue in this country. Their science consists in ascertaining the cause of the ailment, and applying the remedies.

“They deem the most common cause of illness to come from failure to give a feast after some successful fishing or hunting excursion; for then the Sun, which takes pleasure in feasts, is angry with the one who has been delinquent in his duty, and makes him ill.

“Besides this general cause of sickness, there are special ones, in the shape of certain little genii, malevolent in their nature, which thrust themselves of their own accord, or are sent by some enemy, into the parts of the body that are most diseased. Thus, when any one has an aching head, or arm, or stomach, they say that a Manitou has entered this part of the body, and will not cease its torments until it has been drawn or driven out.

“The most common remedy, accordingly, is to summon the Juggler, who comes attended by some old men, with whom he holds a sort of consultation on the patient’s ailment. After this, he falls upon the diseased part, applies his mouth to it, and, by sucking, pretends to extract something from it, as a little stone, or a bit of string, or something else, which he has concealed in his mouth beforehand, and which he displays, saying: ‘There is the Manitou; now thou art cured, and it only remains to give a feast.’

“The Devil, bent on tormenting those poor blinded creatures even in this world, has suggested to them another remedy, in which they place great confidence. It consists in grasping the patient under the arms, and making him walk barefoot over the live embers in the cabin; or, if he is so ill that he cannot walk, he is carried by four or five persons, and made to pass slowly over all the fires, a treatment which often enough results

in this, that the greater suffering thereby produced cures, or induces unconsciousness of, the lesser pain which they strive to cure.

"After all, the commonest remedy, as it is the most profitable for the Physician, is the holding of a feast to the Sun, which is done in the belief that this luminary, which takes pleasure in liberal actions, being appeased by a magnificent repast, will regard the patient with favor, and restore him to health."

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"I must not omit here a rather strange circumstance: on the day after his death his relatives, contrary to all usage of this country, burned his body and reduced it entirely to ashes. The cause of this is found in a legend which passes here for truth.

"It is held beyond dispute that this old man's father was a Hare,—an animal which runs over the snow in winter,—and that thus the snow, the Hare, and the old man are of the same village,—that is, are relatives. It is further said that the Hare told his wife that he disapproved of their children's remaining in the depths of the earth, as that did not befit their condition—they being relatives of the snow, whose country is above, toward the Sky; and, if it ever occurred that they were put into the ground after their death, he would pray the snow, his relative, in order to punish the people for this offense, to fall in such quantities and so long that there should be no Spring. And, to confirm this story, it is added that three years ago the brother of our good old man died, in the beginning of the winter; and, after he had been buried in the usual manner, snow fell to such an extent, and the winter was so long, that people despaired of seeing the spring in its season. Meanwhile, all were dying of hunger, and no remedy could be found for this general suffering. The elders assembled, and held many councils, but all in vain; the snow still continued. Then some one of the company said he remembered the threats which we have related. Straightway they went and disinterred the dead man, and burned him; when immediately the snow ceased, and spring followed. Who would think that people could give credence to such absurd stories? And yet they regard them as true beyond dispute."—*Jes. Relations*, l, pp. 285-295; li, pp. 33-35.