

casion of the feast of the dead, some brought into our Cabin their nets alleging as a pretext the fear they [116] had of fire,—for it is usually in this season that fire often ruins entire Villages; that in our Cabin we were almost always moving about, and slept very little; that we were at some distance from the Village, and consequently were in less danger in that respect. But all this was talk; the true reason was, as we learned afterwards, that they were afraid their nets would be profaned by the proximity of these dead bodies. That is something, to be sure; but here is the foundation of the greater part of their superstitions.

They have a faith in dreams which surpasses all belief; and if Christians were to put into execution all their divine inspirations with as much care as our Savages carry out their dreams, no doubt they would very soon become great Saints. They look upon their dreams as ordinances and irrevocable decrees, the execution of which it is not permitted without crime to delay. A Savage of our Village dreamed this winter, in his first sleep, that he ought straightway to make a feast; and immediately, night as it was, he arose, and came [117] and awakened us to borrow one of our kettles.

The dream is the oracle that all these poor Peoples consult and listen to, the Prophet which predicts to them future events, the Cassandra which warns them of misfortunes that threaten them, the usual Physician in their sicknesses, the Esculapius and Galen of the whole Country,—the most absolute master they have. If a Captain speaks one way and a dream another, the Captain might shout his head off in vain,—the dream is first obeyed. It is their Mercury in