

very middle of their breadth, and there are several fires along its length, according to the number of families and the size of the cabin, usually two or three paces apart. It was through the middle of the cabins, and consequently through the very middle of the fires, that the sick woman marched, her feet and legs bare,—that is to say, through two or three hundred fires,—without doing herself any harm, even complaining all the time how little heat she felt, which did not relieve her of the cold she felt in her feet and legs. Those who held up her hands passed on either side of the fires; and, having led her thus through all the cabins, they took her back to the place whence she had departed, namely, to the cabin where she was sheltered; and thus ended the second Act.

The third followed, which, according to forms and customs, consists in a general mania of all the people of the village, who,—except, perhaps, a few Old Men,—undertake to run wherever the sick woman has passed, adorned [147] or daubed in their fashion, vying with one another in the frightful contortions of their faces,—making everywhere such a din, and indulging in such extravagances, that, to explain them and make them better understood, I do not know if I ought not to compare them, either to the most extravagant of our maskers that one has ever heard of, or to the bacchantes of the ancients, or rather to the furies of Hell. They enter, then, everywhere, and have during the time of the feast, in all the evenings and nights of the three days that it lasts, liberty to do anything, and no one dares say a word to them. If they find kettles over the fire, they upset them; they break the earthen pots, knock down the dogs, throw fire and ashes everywhere, so