

the products of the state of society in which they lived. They were grateful for favors, hospitable both to strangers and friends, and disposed to share with each other in abundance and good fortune.

#### SICKNESS, MOURNING AND BURIAL.

The diseases of the Indians were few but severe in their nature, and, for want of proper treatment, very apt to be fatal. They consisted of quinsies, pleurisies, rheumatisms, quick consumptions, and such others as would naturally be produced by their exposures and hardships, and by their irregular mode of life, now suffering with hunger, and now stuffing themselves to repletion. Tooth-ache seems to have been common; and Roger Williams records the ludicrous fact that, while they could endure every other pain with fortitude, this was too much for their resolution, and would make them cry and groan after a most piteous fashion.

For curatives they sometimes used sweating, and sometimes purged the system with herbs which they knew how to select for that purpose. One mode of producing perspiration was to stand, closely wrapped up, over a hole in the earth containing a heated stone. Another was to remain an hour or more in a little cabin, about eight feet over, which had been strongly heated. These sweating huts were always on the banks of some river or pond, so that, when the patient had perspired sufficiently, he could finish the prescription by rushing out suddenly and plunging into the water.\*

\* Key. Mass. Hist. Coll., Vol. III, p. 236.

But there was another mode of treatment, which, as it depended upon supernatural means, was universally regarded as vastly more efficacious. The practitioners on this system were a set of men called *powwows*, who acted the part in the community of doctors of medicine, magicians and priests. Before the powwow would commence his incantations he required a present; and it is probable, that, according to the value of this, he proportioned the length and earnestness of his exercises. Having received what he considered a suitable gift, he attired himself so as to resemble a wild beast or some nondescript monster, and entering the presence of the sick man, commenced invoking the deities. He began, at first, in a low tone, accompanying his song with strange, extravagant and often ludicrous gestures. As he went on, his motions became violent and frantic, and his voice grew louder and louder, until it ended in furious howls and shouts. Now and then the sick man uttered a word to show his concurrence in the petition; and occasionally, too, his voice was heard joining in the song. When the powwow had exhausted himself, or thought that he had worked out the value of his present, he breathed a few times in the face of the patient and took his leave. The success of this extraordinary mode of treatment was fully proportioned to its nature; and the Indians recovered or died under it, according as their constitutions or the disease proved to be most powerful.

After the death of an individual, the relatives remained at home a few days, receiving the consolatory visits of their friends, who came into the wigwam of the bereaved family, and stroking the mourners softly on the cheek or

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head, said to them, "Be of good cheer." Some wise and grave man, of respectability in the tribe, commonly had the office of conducting the ceremonies of the funeral. Having adorned the neck and arms of the corpse with such ornaments as the relatives could afford, he next swathed it in a covering of mats and skins. With their rude wooden spades they dug a shallow grave; and, having covered the bottom with sticks, they bore the deceased thither and laid him in his resting place. They placed him, sometimes in a sitting, sometimes in a reclining, posture; and by his side they laid implements of war and hunting, and dishes of food, for the use of the disembodied spirit. During this ceremony, the relatives, with their faces painted black in token of mourning, stood by the grave. When it was finished they sat down around the body of their departed brother and wept. Tears flowed down the cheeks, even of men and warriors, and the women exhibited their grief by doleful howls and shrieks. After some time the grave was filled with earth; upon which they broke forth into renewed lamentations, as being now completely separated from the object of their love. Such, according to the descriptions which have been left us, appears to have been an Indian burial.

Sometimes a mat and dish which the deceased person had used were laid on the grave, and one of his garments was hung on the branch of a neighboring tree. There they remained, untouched by friends or enemies, the sport of winds and storms, until decay had mingled them with the dust. No Indian would meddle with them, for they were consecrated to the use of the dead, and, if they should be taken away, the departed spirit might

be compelled to go naked and hungry in the other world.\*

But the funeral ceremonies of the Indians were not always alike; and they sometimes differed, in various particulars, from those which I have just described. When a person of rank died, large sacrifices of property were often made, either as a solemn memento for the deceased, or to appease the anger of God, who was supposed to have sent the calamity. Thus, on the death of a son of Canonicus, grand-sachem of the Narragansetts, the bereaved father set fire to his palace and consumed it with all its furniture and goods.†

#### RELIGION.

Few portions, if any, of the human race are without some system of religion; yet, in barbarous countries, these systems are almost always extremely crude and indefinite. Thus, although the religious dogmas of the aborigines of New England were sufficiently numerous, the accounts which have reached us of them are so various and even conflicting, that it is difficult to compile from them a satisfactory summary. It is certain, however, that they believed in one great and invisible deity, who was variously known, in different tribes, by the names of Kiehtan,‡ Woonand and Cautantowit. He lived far away to the southwest, and concerned himself little with the affairs of men in this life. His nature was benevolent,

\* Key. Mass. Hist. Coll., Vol. III, p. 237.

† The above section is compiled chiefly from Roger Williams' Key and from descriptions of Indian graves which have been opened in various parts of Connecticut.

‡ Winslow's Relation, in Young's Chronicles of Plymouth, p. 355.