



CHAPTER XXIV.

FOOD AND COOKERY.

THE principal food of the Indians consists of the game which they take or kill in the woods, the fish out of the waters, and the maize, potatoes, beans, pumpkins, squashes, cucumbers, melons, and occasionally cabbages and turnips, which they raise in their fields; they make use also of various roots of plants, fruits, nuts, and berries out of the woods, by way of relish or as a seasoning to their victuals, sometimes also from necessity.

They commonly make two meals every day, which, they say, is enough. If any one should feel hungry between meal-times, there is generally something in the house ready for him.

The hunter prefers going out with his gun on an empty stomach; he says, that hunger stimulates him to exertion by reminding him continually of his wants, whereas a full stomach makes a hunter easy, careless, and lazy, ever thinking of his home and losing his time to no purpose. With all their industry, nevertheless, and notwithstanding this strong stimulant, many a day passes over their heads that they have not met with any kind of game, nor consequently tasted a morsel of victuals; still they go on with their chase, in hopes of being able to carry some provisions home, and do not give up the pursuit until it is so dark that they can see no longer.

The morning and evening, they say, are the precious hours for the hunter. They lose nothing by sleeping in the middle of the day, that is to say, between ten o'clock in the morning and four in the afternoon, except in dark, cloudy, and rainy weather, when the whole day is nearly equally good for hunt-

ing. Therefore the hunter, who happens to have no meat in the house, will be off and in the woods before daylight, and strive to be in again for breakfast with a deer, turkey, goose, bear, or raccoon, or some other game then in season. Meanwhile, his wife has pounded her corn, now boiling on the fire, and baked her bread, which gives them a good breakfast. If, however, the husband is not returned by ten o'clock in the forenoon, the family take their meal by themselves, and his share is put aside for him when he comes home.

The Indians have a number of manners of preparing their corn. They make an excellent pottage of it, by boiling it with fresh or dried meat (the latter pounded), dried pumpkins, dry beans, and chestnuts. They sometimes sweeten it with sugar or molasses from the sugar-maple tree. Another very good dish is prepared by boiling with their corn or maize, the washed kernels of the shell-bark or hickory nut. They pound the nuts in a block or mortar, pouring a little warm water on them, and gradually a little more as they become dry, until, at last, there is a sufficient quantity of water, so that by stirring up the pounded nuts the broken shells separate from the liquor, which from the pounded kernels assumes the appearance of milk. This being put into the kettle and mixed with the pottage gives it a rich and agreeable flavour. If the broken shells do not all freely separate by swimming on the top or sinking to the bottom, the liquor is strained through a clean cloth, before it is put into the kettle.

They also prepare a variety of dishes from the pumpkin, the squash, and the green French or kidney beans; they are very particular in their choice of pumpkins and squashes, and in their manner of cooking them. The women say that the less water is put to them, the better dish they make, and that it would be still better if they were stewed without any water, merely in the steam of the sap which they contain. They cover up the pots in which they cook them with large leaves of the pumpkin vine, cabbages, or other leaves of the larger kind. They make an excellent preserve from the cranberry and crab-apple, to which, after it has been well stewed, they add a proper quantity of sugar or molasses.

Their bread is of two kinds ; one made up of green corn while in the milk, and another of the same grain when fully ripe and quite dry. This last is pounded as fine as possible, then sifted and kneaded into dough, and afterwards made up into cakes of six inches in diameter and about an inch in thickness, rounded off on the edge. In baking these cakes, they are extremely particular ; the ashes must be clean and hot, and if possible come out of good dry oak barks, which they say gives a brisk and durable heat. In the dough of this kind of bread, they frequently mix boiled pumpkins, green or dried, dry beans, or well pared chestnuts, boiled in the same manner, dried venison well pounded, whortleberries, green or dry, but not boiled, sugar and other palatable ingredients. For the other kind of bread, the green corn is either pounded or mashed, is put in broad green corn blades, generally filled in with a ladle, well wrapped up, and baked in the ashes, like the other. They consider this as a very delicate morsel, but to me it is too sweet.

Their *Psindamócan* or *Tassmanáne*, as they call it, is the most nourishing and durable food made out of the Indian corn. The blue sweetish kind is the grain which they prefer for that purpose. They parch it in clean hot ashes, until it bursts, it is then sifted and cleaned, and pounded in a mortar into a kind of flour, and when they wish to make it very good, they mix some sugar with it. When wanted for use, they take about a table spoonful of this flour in their mouths, then stooping to the river or brook, drink water to it. If, however, they have a cup or other small vessel at hand, they put the flour in it and mix it with water, in the proportion of one table spoonful to a pint. At their camps they will put a small quantity in a kettle with water and let it boil down, and they will have a thick pottage. With this food, the traveller and warrior will set out on long journeys and expeditions, and as a little of it will serve them for a day, they have not a heavy load of provisions to carry. Persons who are unacquainted with this diet ought to be careful not to take too much at a time, and not to suffer themselves to be tempted too far by its flavour ; more than one or two spoonfuls at most at any one time or at one meal is dangerous ; for it is apt to swell in the stomach or bowels, as when heated over a fire.

Their meat they either boil, roast, or broil. Their roasting is done by running a wooden spit through the meat, sharpened at each end, which they place near the fire, and occasionally turn. They broil on clean coals, drawn off from the fire for that purpose. They often laugh at the white hunters, for baking their bread in dirty ashes, and being alike careless of cleanliness when they broil their meat. They are fond of dried venison, pounded in a mortar and dipped in bear's oil. The Delawares, Mohicans, and Shawanos are very particular in their choice of meats, and nothing short of the most pressing hunger can induce them to eat of certain animals, such as the horse, dog, wild cat, panther, fox, muskrat, wolf, &c., all which I have several times seen the Chippeways feast upon with a seemingly good appetite. The Iroquois are said to have been formerly very dirty in their eating. They dried the entrails of animals without cleaning, or even emptying them of their contents; then cut them into pieces and put them into their pottage, by way of seasoning.¹ The late Mr. Zeisberger has often related to me how he once mistook for black pepper or some other kind of spice, a certain unpleasant ingredient which he found floating in small grains on the surface of their broth.

Far different in this respect are the Lenape and their kindred tribes, particularly the three which I have named above. They are not only cleanly in their eating, but even delicate, and they will sometimes resist the pressing calls of hunger rather than eat the flesh of those animals which they consider as not being proper food for man. Of this I shall give an instance in the following anecdote.

I was travelling in the spring of 1773, from Muskingum to the Big Beaver, with more than twenty Indians, five of whom were old men and the rest women and children, all (except our guide) strangers to the country, having come but the year before from Wyalusing on the Susquehannah. Having been at one time confined two days by the overflowing of two large creeks, between which we were, we found our provisions at an end. Every man who had a gun was called upon to turn out into the

¹ This is not applicable to the Iroquois of the present time.

woods, and try to kill something. Their endeavours, however, were to no purpose; the day passed away, and they all, except the well-known *Popunhank*,¹ who had lost himself, returned to camp at night without bringing any thing of the meat kind but a wild cat, which our guide had shot. The Indians never despair, not even in the worst of times and under the severest trials; when placed in difficult situations they never use discouraging language, but always endeavour to raise their spirits and prevent them from sinking, under the hardships or dangers to which they are exposed. True to this national character, one of our old Indians immediately pronounced this wild cat to be "good, very good eating," and it was immediately ordered to be put on the spit and roasted for our supper. While this was performing, the old Indian endeavoured to divert the company by extolling in a jocular manner the country they had now got into, and where such good things were to be had; to which some one or other of the old men would reply; "all very true." At length, about nine o'clock at night, the call was given by the old cook (for so I now call him) that the meat was done and we might come in to eat. I, who had heard so much in praise of this repast, being greatly pinched with hunger, had kept myself in readiness for this expected call; but seeing nobody rise, and observing much merriment through the camp, I began to suspect that something was the matter, and therefore kept my seat. The night was spent without any body attempting to eat of the wild cat, and in the morning a different call was given by one of the old men, signifying that a large kettle of tea had been made by some of the good women, who invited all to come and take their share of it. Every one obeyed this call, and I went with the rest, the jovial old cook taking the roasted wild cat with him to the mess. The scene was not only very diverting, but brought on an interesting discussion between the men on the propriety or impropriety of eating the flesh of all animals without restriction, some contending that they were all by the will of the great

¹ [A Monsey of Wyalusing, at whose persuasion the Moravian Indians settled on that stream in 1765, who became one of their number, following them to the Big Beaver and the Tuscarawas, where he died in May of 1775. Papunhank's name occurs frequently in the annals of Provincial history between 1762 and 1765.]

Creator ordained for some use, and therefore put in the power of man; and how were we to know which were intended for our nourishment and which not? The old cook had himself taken that position, adding that the hog and the bear fed on dirty things, and yet we ate their meat with a good appetite. The cat, however, notwithstanding all the arguments in its favour, remained untouched, and was taken back by the old hunter and cook to its former place at his fire.

But now, Popunhank, whom we believed to be lost, and our guide, who once more had gone out, and exerted himself in vain to kill a deer, came in together. The guide had been desired as he pursued his hunt to look for our lost companion, and had the good luck to find him at the distance of five or six miles, with a fine deer that he had killed. He lost no time in bringing him back to our camp.

The sight of these two men dragging a large deer along was truly joyful to us, as well on account of the recovery of our lost friend, as of the meat that he brought. All felt the cravings of hunger, all were delighted with the certain prospect of immediate relief, yet no boisterous or extraordinary rejoicing took place, but all called out with one voice: *Anischi! Anischi!* we are thankful. The wild cat, which yet remained untouched, was thrown out of the camp, and dismissed by the old cook with these words: "Go, cat, we do not want you this time!"

The woods and waters, at certain times and seasons, furnish to the Indians an abundant supply of wholesome nourishing food, which, if carefully gathered, cured and stored up, would serve them for the whole year, so that none need perish or even suffer from hunger; but they are not accustomed to laying in stores of provisions, except some Indian corn, dry beans and a few other articles. Hence they are sometimes reduced to great straits, and not seldom in absolute want of the necessities of life, especially in the time of war. Yet, notwithstanding the numerous famines they have been visited with, they have among their traditions but one instance on record in which an human life was taken for the support of others, although they relate many cases in which numbers of them were actually starved to death. The case I allude to was so singular a circumstance, that it

seems the cruel act to which it gave rise was almost unavoidable. I shall relate it here as I have received it from the most unquestionable authority.

In the winter of 1739-40, ever since remembered as the hard winter, when the ground was covered with a very deep snow, a woman with three children, was coming from beyond the Alleghany mountains on a visit to her friends or relations residing at the great island on the west branch of the Susquehannah. After she had reached that river somewhere about *Achtschingi Clammui*, which the whites have corrupted into *Chingleclamoose*,¹ the snow fell in earlier than had been before known, to such a depth, that she could not proceed any farther. She began with putting herself and her children on short allowance, in hopes that the weather might become more moderate, or the snow so hard that they could walk over it. She strove to make her little store of provisions last as long as she could, by using the grass which grew on the river's edge, and certain barks as substitutes, which she boiled to make them digestible; but more snow falling, until at last it rose to the height of a fathom or six feet, she was deprived even of that wretched food, and the wolves hovering about day and night, often attempting to rush into her little encampment, her whole time was taken up with procuring wood and making fires to prevent herself and her children from being frozen to death, and keeping those voracious animals at a distance by throwing out fire-brands to them. Her situation, at last, became intolerable. Having no alternative but that of sacrificing one of her children, she resolved on destroying the youngest, in order to preserve the others and herself from the most dreadful death. After much hesitation, she turned away her eyes and with a trembling hand gave the fatal stroke, filling at the same time the air with her loud lamentations.—She now thought he had obtained a temporary relief, and that she might be able to support herself and her surviving children until a change in the weather should take place, so that they could be able to proceed on their journey;

¹ [The Chinglacamoose, now the Moose, empties into the Susquehannah in Clearfield County, Penna.]

but the wolves getting the scent of the slaughtered child, became more furious than before, her danger every moment became more imminent. She now filled the air with her cries and supplications to the Great Spirit that he would look down with compassion on their awful condition, and save them by his almighty power.—But still the danger increased, the horrid food was almost exhausted, and no relief came. Already she contemplated sacrificing another child; she looked at each of them again and again with a mother's eye, now resolving on killing the one, then changing her mind, and endeavouring to determine on the destruction of the other; she hesitated, wept, despaired, and the children, well understanding what she meant, prayed that they might all die together. While in this situation, her hand already lifted to strike the fatal stroke, the yell of two approaching Indians strikes her ear, and the murderous weapon falls from her hand. The men with rackets to their feet now appear and the dreadful scene is at once closed. They had provisions with them. They made a pair of rackets for the woman to walk on, and brought her and her children along in safety to the Big Island, where my informants resided at the time. I cannot remember whether they told me that they had gone to that spot in consequence of a dream, or of some strong presentiment that they should find human creatures in distress; certain I am, however, that it was owing to one or other of these causes.

The place where this awful event took place was since called *Enda Mohátink*, which means "where human flesh was eaten." This name has been very familiar to the Indians who resided in that part of the country.

There is a spot of land at the edge of the great Pine or Beech Swamp, precisely where it is crossed by the road leading to Wyoming, which is called *the Hermit's Field*, and of which the following account is given. A short time before the white people came into Pennsylvania, a woman from some cause or other had separated herself from society, and with her young son, had taken her abode in this swamp, where she remained undiscovered until the boy grew up to manhood, procuring a livelihood by the use of the bow and arrow, in killing deer,

turkeys and other animals, planting corn and vegetables, and gathering and curing nuts and berries of various kinds. When after her long seclusion she again saw Indians, she was much astonished to find them dressed in European apparel. She had become so attached to her place of abode, that she again¹ returned thither and remained there for several years. I was shewn by the Indians in the year 1765, and often afterwards, the corn hills that she had made; the ground, being a stiff clay, was not wasted or worn down, but was covered with bushes, and the traces of the labour of the female hermit were plainly discoverable.

Thus the Indians will support themselves in the midst of the greatest difficulties, never despairing of their fate, but trusting to their exertions, and to the protection of the Almighty Being who created them.

¹ Dele *again*.

