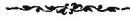




PART II.



A

CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN

THE REV. JOHN HECKEWELDER,

OF BETHLEHEM,

AND

PETER S. DUPONCEAU, ESQ.,

CORRESPONDING SECRETARY OF THE HISTORICAL AND LITERARY
COMMITTEE OF THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY,

RESPECTING THE

Languages of the American Indians.

349





THE following Correspondence between Mr. Heckewelder and Peter S. Du Ponceau, Esq., Corresponding Secretary of the Historical and Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society, and subsequently, till his death in 1844, President of that Society, is appended as a fitting sequel to the preceding Account.





THE Historical and Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society, desirous of taking the most effectual means to promote the objects of their institution, directed their corresponding secretary to address letters in their name to such persons in the United States as had turned their attention to similar objects, and solicit their assistance.

Among other well-informed individuals, the Reverend Mr. Heckewelder of Bethlehem was pointed out by the late Dr. Caspar Wistar, President of the Society, and one of the most active and useful members of the Committee, as a gentleman whose intimate knowledge of the American Indians, their usages, manners and languages, enabled him to afford much important aid to their labours. In consequence of this suggestion, the secretary wrote to Mr. Heckewelder the letter No. 1, and Dr. Wistar seconded his application by the letter No. 2. The languages of the Indians were not at that time particularly in the view of the Committee; the manners and customs of those nations were the principal subjects on which they wished and expected to receive information. But Mr. Heckewelder having with his letter No. 4, sent them the MS. of Mr. Zeisberger's Grammar of the Delaware Language, that communication had the effect of directing their attention to this interesting subject.

This MS. being written in German, was not intelligible to the greatest number of the members. Two of them, the Reverend Dr. Nicholas Collin, and the corresponding secretary, were par-

ticularly anxious to be honoured with the task of translating it ; but the secretary having claimed this labour as part of his official duty, it was adjudged to him. While he was translating that work, he was struck with the beauty of the grammatical forms of the Lenape idiom, which led him to ask through Dr. Wistar some questions of Mr. Heckewelder,¹ which occurred to him as he was pursuing his labours, and produced the correspondence now published, which was carried on by the direction and under the sanction of the Committee.

The letters which passed at the beginning between Dr. Wistar and Mr. Zeisberger,² and are here published in their regular order, do not, it is true, form a necessary part of this collection ; but it will be perceived, that to the two letters of Dr. Wistar, Nos. 2 and 6, we are indebted for the valuable Historical Account of the Indians, which forms the first number of this volume. It is just that he should have the credit due to his active and zealous exertions.

It was intended that Mr. Zeisberger's Grammar should have immediately followed this Correspondence, which was considered as introductory to it. But it being now evident that it would increase too much the size of the volume, its publication is for the present postponed.

¹ Letter V.

² For "*Zeisberger*" read "*Heckewelder*."

