
Notes respecting certain TEXTILE SUBSTANCES
in use among the North American INDIANS,
by W. GREEN, *Esqr.*

THE Indians of North America were found, by the Europeans, in possession of the means of manufacturing cordage, and of making a variety of articles of fine thread, both by ingenious plaiting, and by weaving in its simpler modes. It does not appear that, for these purposes, they used the flaxen and hempen fibres which we employ; nor does it appear that the *phormion tenax*, (if, indeed, this continent or its islands produced that plant, so abundant in New Zealand, and elsewhere in Polynesia,) nor that the nettle, [*urtica*] each of them so much superior in strength and elasticity to hemp, were known to the Indians as textile fibre. Sinew and hide were among the substances extensively used by them, and preferred for many purposes for which their superior strength and the minute divisibility of the former peculiarly fitted them. The flax and hemp introduced from Europe, have by no means, even now, and among those Indians whose domestication has given them the readiest access to European productions, superseded the use of the substances employed by their ancestors: and, if this retention be not merely a consequence of partiality for that which is derived from the remote past—

but be founded on a knowledge, either of the sufficient or the superior fitness of the articles to the end of their application, or on the facility with which, from their abundance, they may every where be procured, it may be useful to record what are the substances, and what the process by which they are prepared, in the hope of enlarging our own list of materials useful in manufactures and arts.

The inner bark of the more slender branches of the elm, of hornbeam [*carpinus*], of American walnut [*juglans cinerea*], of linden [*tilia*], of *bois de plomb* [?], being stripped from the wood, and the outer bark scraped off, is macerated in ley of wood-ashes, and boiled in it, then rinsed in pure water; and, for many purposes, such as the making of various ligatures, no other preparation than merely twisting it to increase its flexibility, (as is done with withs in the same intention,) is used. But for plaiting and weaving, the bark having been treated as above, is beaten with a mallet, until its separated fibres become of the required tenuity. Among the articles made of these filaments, are the bands which, passing round the head and shoulders, sustain the weights the Indians have to carry in their excursions. The strain these bands bear on such occasions is very great. They are ingeniously plaited, often highly ornamented with embroidery, are two or three inches in breadth, are divided at the ends into narrow strips, for the more convenient attachment of the suspended baggage, and they are as soft and pliant as any thing made of flax can be.

For coarser purposes the bark of white cedar [*thuya occidentalis*], is used. It does not undergo the preparation stated above, but is merely supplied by twisting. All the above materials may be procured several feet in length.

For stitching the sheets of birch bark, of which their canoes are made, slender roots of the spruce tree are used. The root is merely slit longitudinally into strips, as thick as packthread, moistened, twisted and applied. The sewing is then payed over with resin extracted from pine-knots by boiling them in water.

The *phormion tenax*, although so exceedingly strong, contains some principle soluble in weak alkaline ley and even in soap and water, the removal of which principle reduces its strength below that of most other fibres, very much limiting its utility. The fibre procured by the Indians, in not being weakened by these menstrua, has some advantage over that otherwise invaluable filament.

It cannot be doubted that every textile fibre of vegetable origin would be a fit material for *paper*—and it is probable that the toughness of that article, which ought to be extreme, might be made as nearly equal to that of the original material as is consistent with its nature, by reducing it to pulp by *sufficiently pounding it, instead of hashing it*, (as is usually done,) into particles having little more coherence than is afterwards supplied by sizing the sheet.

*Autograph Letter of COTTON MATHER, on
WITCHCRAFT, presented to the Literary
and Historical Society, by the Honorable
Chief Justice SEWELL.*

17th 6^m, 1692.

S^r,

You would know whether I still retain my opinion about y^e horrible Witchcrafts among us, and I acknowledge that I do.

I do still Think That when there is no further Evidence against a person but only This, That a Spectre in their Shape does afflict a neighbour, that Evidence is not enough to convict y^e — of Witchcraft.

That the Divels have a natural power w^{ch} makes them capable of exhibiting what shape they please I suppose no body doubts, and I have no absolute promise of God that they shall not exhibit *mine*.

It is the opinion generally of all protestant writers that y^e Divel may thus abuse y^e innocent, yea, tis y^e confession of some popish ones. And o^r Honorable Judges are so eminent for their Justice, Wisdom, & Goodness that whatever their own particular sense may bee, yett they will not proceed capitally against any, upon a principle contested

with great odds on y^e other side in y^e Learned and Godly world.

Nevertheless, a very great use is to be made of y^e spectral impressions upon y^e sufferers. They Justly Introduce, and Determine, an Enquiry into y^e circumstances of y^e person accused; and they strengthen other presumptions.

When so much use is made of those Things, I believe y^e use for w^{ch} y^e Great God intends y^m is made. And accordingly you see that y^e Excellent Judges have had such an Encouraging presence of God with them, as that scarce any, if at all any, have been Tried before them, against whom God has not strangely sent in other, & more Humane & most convincing Testimonies.

If any persons have been condemned, about whom any of y^e Judges, are not easy in their minds, that y^e Evidence against them, has been satisfactory, it would certainly be for y^e glory of the whole Transaction to give that person a Reprieve.

It would make all matters easier if at least Bail were taken for people Accused only by y^e invisible tormentors of y^e poor sufferers and not Blemished by any further Grounds of suspicion against them.

The odd Effects produced upon the sufferers by y^e look or touch of the accused are things wherein y^e Divels may as much Impose upon some Harmless people as by the Representacôn of their shapes.

My notion of these matters is this. A Suspected and unlawfull com^union with a Familiar Spirit, is the Thing enquired after. The communion on the *Divels* part may be proved, while, for ought I can say, The *man* may be Innocent; the Divel may impudently Impose his com^union upon some that care not for his company. But if the

com^union on y^e man's part bee proved, then the Business is done.

I am suspicious Lest y^e Diavel may at some time or other, serve us a trick by his constancy for a long while in one way of Dealing. Wee may find the Diavel using one constant course in Nineteen several Actions, and yett hee bee too hard for us at last, if wee thence make a Rule to form an Infallible Judgement of a Twentieth. It is o^r singular Happiness That wee are blessed with Judges who are Aware of this Danger.

For my own part if the Holy God should permitt such a Terrible calamity to befall myself as that a Spectre in my Shape should so molest my neighbourhood, as that they can have no quiet, altho' there should be no other Evidence against me, I should very patiently submit unto a Judgment of *Transportation*, and all reasonable men would count o^r Judges to Act, as they are like y^e Fathers of y^e public, in such a Judgment. What if such a Thing should be ordered for those whose Guilt is more Dubious, and uncertain, whose presence y^s perpetuates y^e miseries of o^r sufferers? They would cleanse y^e Land of Witchcrafts, and yett also prevent y^e shedding of Innocent Blood, whereof some are so apprehensive of Hazard. If o^r Judges want any Good Bottom, to act thus upon, You know, that besides y^e usual power of Govern^{rs}, to Relax many Judgments of Death, o^r General Court can soon provide a law.

S^r,

You see y^e Incoherency of my Thoughts but I hope, you will also some Reasonableness in those Thoughts.

In the year 1645, a Vast Number of persons in y^e county of *Suffolk* were apprehended, as Guilty of Witchcraft; whereof, some confessed. The parliament granted a special

com[^]ission of *Oyer & Terminer* for y^e Trial of those Witches; in w^{ch} com[^]ission, there were a famous Divine or two, M^r *Fariclough* particularly inserted. That Excellent man did preach two sermons to y^e Court, before his first sitting on y^e Bench: Wherein having first proved the Existence of Witches, hee afterwards showed y^e Evil of Endeavouring y^e Conviction of any upon Defective Evidence. The Sermon had the Effect that none were Condemned, who could bee saved w^{thout} an Express Breach of y^e Law; & then tho' t'was possible some Guilty did Escape, yett the troubles of those places, were, I think Extinguished.

O^r case is Extraordinary. And so, you and others will pardon y^e Extraordinary Liberty I take to address You on this occasion. But after all, I Entreat you, that whatever you do, you Strengthen y^e Hands of o^r Honourable Judges in y^e Great work before y^m. They are persons, for whom no man living has a greater veneration, than

S^r,

Your Servant

C. MATHER.

For

the Honourable

John Foster Esq.