

CHAPTER III.

After the removal of Weiser and others from Schoharie, the difficulties to which the ignorance and suspicions of the people had subjected them, were soon quieted, and they once more became a happy community. They were careful afterwards to secure legal titles to their lands, and thereby remove the danger of troubles in future, from a cause which had already tended greatly to decrease their numbers, and harrass their feelings.

There were, as I have been informed, several apple trees standing on the flats near the present dwelling of John Ingold, at the time the Germans arrived, supposed to have been planted by the Indians. One of these antiquated trees, at least 140 years old, was still standing in 1842, and very fruitful. Other trees of the same planting were yet bearing fruit in 1837. The trees from which the first apple orchards in Schoharie were derived, were procured, as Judge Brown assured me, in the following manner. One Campbell and several other individuals went from the Schoharie valley to New York, to be naturalized, a few years after the settlement was commenced. Their business accomplished, they started for home on board of a sloop; but not having money enough to pay their passage to Albany, they were landed at or near Rhinebeck, and traveled from thence on foot. Crossing the Rhinebeck flats, each pulled up a bundle of small apple trees in the nurseries they passed, from which the first orchards in Schoharie were planted.

The second season after the murder of his agent Truax, in Vrooman's Land, Peter Vrooman returned to that place and established a permanent residence. He planted an apple orchard,

which is yet standing, near the dwelling of Harmanus Vrooman. Some of the Swarts, Eckers, Zielleys, Haggidorns, Feecks, and Beckers, with perhaps some other Dutch families, settled in that vicinity about the same time.

There were few regular mechanics among the first settlers, on which account the native genius of all was more or less taxed. We have seen to what inconvenience and labor they were subjected for the want of mills. The first grist mill in the county was erected by Simeon Laraway, on the small stream called Mill brook, from that circumstance, which runs into Fox's creek near Waterbury's mills. Upon a bridge which crossed this brook, Sheriff Adams was left, after having had ocular demonstration of the prowess of Magdalene Zeh, in the first anti-rent war. Some part of the race-way of this mill is still to be seen. Before the erection of Simeon's mill, as usually called, several hand mills, like the one at Weiser's dorf, were in frequent use. In the course of twenty or thirty years after Weiser and his friends left, several other mills were established in and about Schoharie. One Cobel erected two of those.* One of them was built on a small brook in a ravine on the south side of the road, a few rods distant from the river bridge, one mile from the Court House. The other mill he erected about the same time on Cobelskill, which took its name from that circumstance. It stood near the mouth of the kill. It was not until about the year 1760, that bolting cloths were used in Schoharie. Henry Weaver, who owned a mill near where Becker's now stands, on Foxes creek, was the first who introduced them.

At almost as late a period as the revolution, the colonists pro-

* This creek took its name after the paternal name of the mill-wright, as Judge Brown assured me. I find the name written *Cobels kill* in many of the old conveyances, and in all the early Session laws, of the state. It is, in truth, the correct orthography of the word. In writing Fox's and Cobel's kill, I shall in future omit the apostrophe and hyphen, for reasons obvious to the reader.

The Indians called Cobelskill the *Ots ga-ra-gee* which signified the hemp creek. When first settled by the whites, an abundance of wild hemp grew along its banks. The natives often visited them to procure it, making from it fish nets, and ropes to aid them in transporting their portable wealth.

cured most of their shoes at Albany, or East Camp; and one pair was the yearly allowance for each member of the family. They were repaired by traveling cobblers.

Those unaffected Germans were not *votaries to fashion*, of course they were not very particular about receiving their male fashions from England, or their female from France. The good wife and daughters generally cut and made the rude apparel of the family, and thought it *no disgrace*. The settlers manufactured most of their own buttons, and often the same garment had on those of very different sizes, of wood, horn, bone or lead.

Not having been accustomed to luxuries from childhood, they were contented with simple fare and uncouth fashions. Their clothes, as may be supposed, did not set out a good form to very fascinating advantage. Those useless bipeds denominated *dandies*, noted for their mustaches, idleness and empty pockets, were unknown in the Schoharie valley at that day; indeed, they are strangers there at the present time. Of course, other considerations than mere dress, or a display of jewelry, could create, influenced their choice of a partner for life. They had little to be proud of, consequently many of the men did not shave oftener than once or twice a month. A Dow or a Matthias would hardly have been distinguished from them, had they appeared at that day. Habituating themselves to do men's work, many of the women were, from exposure, sun-burnt and coarse featured, and in some instances it became necessary for them to clip an exuberant growth of beard, which was done with scissors.

Lawrence Schoolcraft, one of the first settlers in Schoharie, at the residence of Peter Vrooman, made the first cider in the county. The manner of making it being unique, was as follows. The apples were first pounded in a stamper similar to the Indian corn stamper before mentioned. After being thus bruised, the pumice was placed in a large Indian basket previously suspended to a tree, beneath which was inserted a trough, made by fastening together the edges of two planks, which served to catch and carry the juice compressed by weights in the basket, into some vessel placed for its reception. In the year 1752, one Brown, the father

of Judge Brown, removed from West Camp to Schoharie. He was then a widower, and soon after his arrival married a widow, who possessed ten acres of land and about one hundred and ten pounds in cash; which enabled him to establish and carry on his trade successfully. He was a wheel-wright, and the first who prosecuted that business in the county. The people had manufactured a kind of rude wagon before his arrival, with which they transported light loads to and from Albany, performing the journey in about five days. This Brown, in 1753, made the first *cider-press* ever used in the county. The same process which prepared the pumice for Schoolcraft did for Brown, as he purchased the same pounder. The press was first used at Hartman's dorf, where he resided.

John Mattice Junk, or Young in English, the grand-father of Judge Brown, on the Mother's side, is said to have taught the first German school at the Camps, ever taught in America. This was about the year 1740. Schools began to be taught in the Schoharie settlements shortly after; one Spease kept the first, and one Keller the next. German teachers were employed in the German settlements, while at Vrooman's land a school was taught in Dutch. About the year 1760, English instruction was introduced into those schools, and in some instances the English, German and Dutch languages were all taught by one teacher, in the same school. Little attention was then paid to the convenience or comfort of the scholars. Barns, in some instances, became *school-houses* as well as *churches*, in the summer; and if schools were continued in the winter, some rude log dwelling became a witness to the child's improvement. Stoves, in those days, were unknown. The settlers had mammoth fire-places, however, and plenty of wood; and in numberless instances, a fearful proportion of a cord was seen ignited in the same fire.

Few horses were shod for many years after the settlement began; and those persons, who required any kind of smith-work their own igenuity could not create, were obliged to go to Albany or Schenectada to get it done. John Ecker is said to have

been the first black-smith in the Schoharie valley, and he was a self instructed one.

The Germans formerly brewed a kind of domestic strong beer, and most of those in Schoharie brewed their own.

From the fact, that the Dutch, who settled in Vrooman's Land, were more wealthy than their German neighbors located below them, a kind of pride or distant formality, was manifested by the former towards the latter for many years. When prejudices of any kind are allowed to gain a place in the human breast, it often requires generations to eradicate them. The prejudices alluded to as having existed between the Dutch and Germans, tended for many years almost wholly to prevent inter-marriages between them. The former, therefore, who did not choose to marry cousins—most of those settlers being related—went to Schenectada or Albany for wives. As Cupid is now and then a very mischievous boy, there may have been individual instances, in which the irresistible passion of love, aided by stratagem, trampled paternal prejudices under foot, and united the sturdy German and amorous Dutch maiden. But we must suppose such cases extremely rare, as the law which still requires in some parts of New England, the publishing of the bans for several Sabbaths preceding the nuptials, was then in force in New York.

The Germans, when they located at Schoharie, owned no slaves, nor, indeed, did they for several years; but these accompanied the Dutch on their arrival as a part of their gear. By industry, and a proper husbanding of what the earth produced, the wealth of the former increased rapidly, and it was not long before they, too, possessed them.

The manner in which the slaves of Schoharie were generally treated by their masters, is not inaptly described by *Mrs. Grant*, in her *Memoirs of Albany*. They were allowed freedom of speech, and indulged in many things, which other members of the family were, whose ages corresponded to their own; and to a superficial spectator, had the color not interfered, they would have seemed on an equality. Individual instances may now be cited where blacks would be much better off under a good master than they now

are, or, indeed, than thousands of the operatives of England are—still, no one can from moral principle, although he may from motives of expediency, advocate the continuance of the evil as just and proper in any country. The existence of slavery in the United States, is the greatest stain upon their national escutcheon. This I believe to be a fact generally conceded, by all the good and virtuous in the land. The question then, which naturally arises, is, or rather it should be, what is the best and most proper manner of obliterating the stain? Let reason and common sense, not fanaticism and malice, reply.

Many of the tools used in husbandry in former days, were both clumsy and uncouth. Rakes used in Schoharie, were made with teeth on both sides. Hay forks were made of wood, from a stick having a suitable crotch for tines, or by splitting one end of a straight stick and inserting a wedge. The improvement made in plows since that time, is perhaps as great as that made on any one implement of the cultivator. The wagons seen in Schoharie before the year 1760, had no tire upon the wheels.

Grain was then thrashed, as it is at the present day by the descendants of those people who have no machines for the purpose, by the feet of horses. The process is simple, and as it is fast giving place to the buzzing of machines, it may be well to relate it. In the center of the barn floor, which is roomy, an upright bar is placed, previously rendered a pivot at each end, to enter a hole in the floor below, and a corresponding one in a beam or plank over head. Through this shaft, at a suitable height from the floor, a pole is passed, to which several horses are fastened so as to travel abreast. Sometimes a number are fastened to each end of the pole, and in some instances, a second pole is passed through the shaft at right angles with the first, to which horses are also attached. A quantity of sheaves being opened and spread upon the floor, the horses are started at a round trot, thus trampling the grain from the straw. The upright, when the horses move, turns upon its own pivots. Persons in attendance, are constantly employed in turning and shaking the straw with a fork, keeping the horses in motion, removing any uncleanness, &c. The outside

horse travels, as may be supposed, much farther in his circuits than the inside one, for which reason they are occasionally shifted. Grain is broken less if thrashed with unshod horses. Some use a roller to aid in the process. This is a heavy, rounded timber, worked much smaller at one end than the other, with square pins of hard wood inserted at proper distances the whole length. The smallest end of this roller is so fastened to the shaft as to preserve the horizontal motion of one, and the perpendicular motion of the other, at the same time. To the heavy end of the roller, horses are fastened, drawing it on the same principle, that the stone wheel in an ancient bark mill was drawn. In threshing with horses, the roller is a great assistance. Fanning-mills, for cleaning grain, were unknown in former times, it being separated from its chaff by fans, or shoveling it in the wind.

As I have already stated, much prejudice existed at Schoharie in former days, between the Germans and Dutch. These national antipathies were manifested in nothing more clearly at first, than in matters of *religion*. The early Germans were, almost without exception, disciples to the doctrines of Martin Luther; while the Dutch, collectively, subscribed the Calvinistic, or Dutch Reformed creed. Time, however, the great healer of dissensions, aided by intelligence, the champion of liberality, by degrees lessened, and has now almost entirely removed those prejudices. While they existed, they tended to prevent that friendly interchange of good feeling—that reciprocity of kindness, so necessary to the prosperity and happiness of an isolated people. As Judge Brown remarked, at our interview, “the Low Dutch girls formerly thought but little of the High Dutch boys,” and the young people of both settlements kept separate companies for many years. In a few instances, elopement took place, but they were rare, as distant ministers were cautious about uniting a couple who could not produce a certificate of publication, although ocular demonstration might convince them of the genuineness of their affection, and demand their union.

Among the first shoemakers who worked at the trade in Schoharie, was one William Dietz. Few, if any, boots were then

worn. Men wore low, and women high heeled (called French heeled) shoes. A specimen of the latter may now be seen in the Cabinet of John Gebhard, jr. Esq., at Schoharie Court House. Shoes were then fastened with buckles, which, like those worn at the knees, were made of silver, brass or pewter. Caleb Cosput and John Russeau were the first tailors. They worked, as did the first shoemakers, by *whipping the cat*—from house to house. Breeches and even coats were made of deer-skins, and in some instances, of blankets, in their day: the former being fastened to striped hose at the knees with huge buckles, of silver, if attainable, if not, of brass or pewter.

One Delavergne was the first hatter, and is said to have been well patronized. Cocked, or three cornered hats were then the tip of fashion.

To see an *exquisite* of the present, dressed in the costume of that day, with hair long-cramped before, and terminating at the neck in a braided cue, or if not braided, wound with black ribbon or an eel-skin, the whole head being finely powdered and surmounted with a cocked hat; with a blanket coat on, of no ordinary dimensions, ornamented with various kinds of buttons; breeches of deer-skin, too tight for comfort, and kept up without braces by a tight band above the hips, allowing the nether garment to appear between them and the vest, and fastened at the knee with large bright buckles to a pair of striped silk hose; the whole of the fabric described, resting upon a pair of pedestals cased in pen-knife pointed shoes clasped with daring buckles; the hero with a pipe in his mouth, the bowl as large as a tea-cup—would be worth far more to the spectator, than to visit a menagerie and see half a dozen country girls mounted upon the back of an elephant, or a fool-hardy keeper enter a cage with the most ferocious animals.

Fish are said to have been very plenty formerly in most of the streams in Schoharie county. For many years after the Revolution, trout were numerous in Foxes creek, where now there are few, if any at all. From a combination of causes, fish are now becoming scarce throughout the county. In many small streams,

they have been nearly or quite exterminated by throwing in lime. This cruel system of taking the larger, destroys with more certainty all the smaller fish. Such a mode of fishing cannot be too severely censured. The accumulation of dams on the larger streams, proves unfavorable to their multiplication. Fine pike are now occasionally caught in the Schoharie, as are also suckers and eels. Some eighty years ago, a mess of fish could have been taken, in any mill-stream in the county, in a few minutes.

Wild animals of almost every kind found in the same climate, were numerous in and about Schoharie, for a great length of time after the whites arrived. Bears and wolves, the more gregarious kinds, often appeared in droves numbering scores, and in some instances, hundreds; and were to the pioneer a source of constant anxiety and alarm. Deer, which were then very numerous, the mountainous parts affording them, as all other animals, a safe retreat, are still killed some winters in considerable numbers, in the south part of the county. But few incidents, worthy of notice, relating to wild animals, have come to my knowledge. One of the first German settlers was killed by a bear, between the residence of the late Cyrus Swart (near the stone church,) and the hill east of it. He had wounded the animal with a gun, when it turned upon, and literally tore him in pieces. The Indians hunted them for food, and not unfrequently had an encounter with them. Nicholas Warner assured the author, that when a boy, he saw an Indian, called Bellows, returning from a hunt, holding in his own bowels with his hands. He had, after wounding a large bear, met it in personal combat, and although so terribly lacerated he slew it. Jacob Becker informed me, that there was an Indian about Foxes creek in his younger days, called *The-bear-catcher*, who received his name from the following circumstance. He was hunting—treed a large bear and fired upon it. The beast fell and a personal rencounter ensued. The Indian, in the contest, seized with an iron grasp the lower jaw of Bruin, and a back-hug was the consequence. He succeeded in holding his adversary so firmly that the latter could not draw his paws between their bodies. Bruin had, however, in the outset, succeeded in drawing one of

them obliquely across the breast of the red man, scarifying it in a fearful manner. While thus situated, holding his adversary at bay, he called to a son, who was hunting in the woods not far off, for his assistance. The latter repaired hastily to the spot, and although he might at times have approved of a fair fight, in the present instance paternal affection demanded his immediate interference. Placing the muzzle of his rifle between the extended jaws of the bear, he discharged it, to the great relief of his father, who had been so affectionately embraced. The following adventure was related by Andrew Loucks. One Warner, who was among the first settlers at Punch-kill, went out towards evening to seek his cows. He met in his path a large bear, having cubs, which instantly pursued him. He ran for safety behind a large tree; round which himself and madam Bruin played bo-peep for some time—neither gaining any advantage. At length Warner seized a hemlock knot, and with it, Sampson like, slew his shaggy pursuer. The following story was also told me by Jacob Becker, the scene in which is said to have been enacted near Foxes creek. John Shaeffer and George Schell went hunting. Shaeffer had a dog which treed a bear, and he being near at the time, instantly fired upon it. Bruin fell, though not passively to yield life. The dog attacked him, but was so lovingly hugged, that his eyes seemed starting from their sockets, and he cried piteously. Shaeffer thought too much of his canine friend to see him fall a victim to such affection, and endeavored to loosen one of the bear's paws: but as he seized it, it was relaxed and quicker than thought thrown round again, so as to include in the embrace his own arm. Shaeffer might as easily have withdrawn his hand from a vise. When he found he had caught a *tartar*, or, rather, that the bear had, he hallooed like a loon for his companion to come to his assistance and reach him his tomahawk. Many of the white hunters, in former times, were as careful to wear tomahawks as their Indian neighbors. The missile was handed very cautiously at arms' length, and Shaeffer buried the blade of it in the brains of his game, to the relief of his other arm and the resuscitation of the dog. Brain, as may be supposed, did not relish the interfer-

ence of the master, when he was evincing so much of the *world's genuine love* for Carlo.

The three most prominent hills east of Middleburgh village, are] called the Fire-berg, the Amos-berg, and the Clipper-berg. The first named is the most southern, and took its name (as Geo. Warner informed the author) from the following circumstance. A tar barrel having been raised to the top of a tall tree on that hill, it was, at a particular hour of a certain night, set on fire, to ascertain if the light could be seen from the residence of Sir William Johnson, in Johnstown, at whose instigation it was done. Whether it was seen there or not, tradition does not inform us, but the circumstance was sufficient to originate a name for the hill. Amos-berg, the next one north, signifies the ant-hill, or hill of ants; it having been, in former times, literally covered with those insect mounds. Clipper-berg, directly north of Amos-berg, signifies the rocky-hill, or hill scantily covered with vegetation.

The following story was related to me by Maria Teabout. She with several other individuals, was on the Fire-berg before the revolution, when a loud scream like that of a child was heard some distance off, to which she made answer by a similar one. She was told by the men to keep still, that it was a *painter*, and by answering it they would be in great danger. "A painter!" she exclaimed, "what then is a painter?" Being young and heedless, she continued to answer its cries, until her companions, alarmed for their own safety, had taken to flight, and she found herself alone. As she was part native she felt little fear, until the near approach of the animal struck terror upon her mind. She had not time enough left her to secure a safe retreat, but instantly concealed herself in a hollow tree. The animal approached so near that she saw it from her concealment, but as that did not see her, it went back in the direction from whence it came. In the meantime, those who had fled on the panther's approach, went home and reported Maria as slain in an awful manner. A party, consisting of Col. Zielie, with half a dozen of his neighbors, and a few Indians, all mounted on horseback and armed with

guns, set out to seek and bring whatever of Maria might be left, after the panther had satiated his appetite. Leaving their horses near the entrance, they went into the woods and began to call to her. She heard the voice of Col. Zielie, and came out from her hiding place. The Indians then declared they would soon have the panther. After fixing a blanket on a tree so as to present a tolerable effigy of one of their party, they all fell back and concealed themselves behind trees. An Indian then began to call, and was soon answered by the animal, which approached stealthily. When it came in sight, it fixed its eye on the effigy, and crawling along with the stillness of a cat, it approached within a few paces, from whence, after moving its tail briskly for a few seconds, it bounded upon it with the speed of an arrow. In an instant the blanket was torn into strings, and as the disappointed animal stood lashing its sides furiously with its tail, looking for the cause of the voice, (panthers having no knowledge or belief in ghosts) and its deception, a volley of rifle balls laid it dead on the spot. The skin was taken off, and some slices of the *critter*, as Natty Bumpo would call it, were taken home by several of the Indians to broil. Thus ended the panther, and thus did not end my informant. Few panthers have been killed in the county since the remembrance of any one living in it. One of the last was shot near the residence of John Enders, on Foxes creek.

The sagacious beaver was a resident of this county on the arrival of the Germans. They were numerous along Foxes creek, and at a place called the Beaver-dam, on that stream, which is now in the town of Berne, Albany county, they had several strong dams.

Wild-cats were numerous in Schoharie formerly. The following anecdote is related of old Doctor Moulter, a sort of physician who lived on Foxes creek, and flourished about the time of the Revolution. He awoke one night from pleasant dreams, to hear an unusual noise among his setting geese. Without waiting to dress, or seize upon any weapon, he ran out to learn the cause of alarm. On arriving at the scene of action, although his prospect was yet sombre, he discovered the cause of disturbance in the ap-

pearance of an unwelcome animal, that was paying its devoirs to the comely neck of the mistress of a polluted bee-hive. He ran up and seized it by the neck and hind legs, and although it struggled hard to regain its liberty, he succeeded in holding it until his boys, to whom he called for assistance, came and killed it. The reader may judge his surprize as well as that of his family, when, on taking it to the light, it proved to be a good sized wild-cat. Had he caught hold of it otherwise than he did, it is highly probable that in his state of almost native nudity, he would have repented his grasp, if not lost his life. Many anecdotes are told of this same Dr. Moulter. When he located at Schoharie, he was afraid to ride on horseback, unless some one led his horse by the bridle. Those who led his nag for him, grew tired of gratifying his whims, and would occasionally let go his reins, and leave him to shift for himself. This kind of treatment soon taught the old Doctor the skill of horsemanship. He is said to have doctored for witches, and promulged the superstitious doctrine of witchcraft. Nor was he wanting in believers, as no dogmas, however *doggish* they may be, need much preaching to gain proselytes.

Francis Otto, who is said to have established the first distillery in the county, (which was for cider-brandy, and stood perhaps half a mile east of the present site of the Court House) was also a kind of doctor. In fact, he was one of that useful class, who can turn their hand to almost anything; being a brandy-maker, a doctor, a phlebotomist, a barber, a fortune-teller, etc., as occasion required. He too, believed in witchcraft. His death took place just before the Revolution, in the following manner. He had spent the evening at the house of Ingold, where now stands the dwelling of John Ingold; and left there to go home, with the bosom of his shirt, his general traveling store-house, filled with apples. He may, to have kept off the chill of the evening, and increase his courage, tasted a potation of his own distilling, of which he was very fond. On the following morning he was found in a bruised state, having fallen off the rocks not far from his own dwelling. He was alive when found, but died soon af-

ter. As he was much afraid of witches, and the like evil geni, it was confidently asserted and generally believed, that witches had thrown him off the rocks. Thus ended the first distiller, poor Otto, of bewitching memory.

Deer, it has been remarked, were numerous in and about Schoharie formerly. Jacob Becker related the following story, which he had learned from his father. An old Indian, who lived in Garlock's dorf, was very skillful in the use of the bow and arrow. This Indian stationed himself one day, at a run-way the deer had on the north side of Foxes creek, not a great distance from Becker's mill. It was at a place where there is a small stream of water descends from the hill, affording a kind of path from that to the flats below. At this place this Indian was concealed, when a noble deer came leisurely down the declivity. An arrow from his bow pierced the heart of the unsuspecting victim, when it bounded forward a few paces and fell dead. Scarcely had he time to draw from his quiver an arrow, before another deer descended. A second arrow sped, and a second bleeding victim lay stretched near its fellow. Another and another descended to meet a similar fate, until six were, in quick succession, bleeding upon the ground. There were times, when, like the one named, the arrow was as trusty as the rifle ball. The distance must not be great, however, and the bow must be drawn by a skillful warrior. The arrow giving no report to alarm the following deer, the Indian was enabled, by his masterly skill, to bring down six, when a single discharge from a rifle, would have sent the five hindmost deer, on the back track. The arrow, however, would not tell upon a distant object like the rifle ball, and great muscular strength was required to send it, even at a short distance, to the heart of a bounding buck.

Rattle-snakes were very numerous formerly, along the north side of Foxes creek, and the west side of the Schoharie. Hundreds were often killed in a single day at either place. Neighborhoods turned out in the spring about the time they came from their dens, in the latter part of April, or early part of May, to destroy them, and by thus waging war against them, they were

nearly exterminated. There are a few remaining now at both places. It was not uncommon, in raising a sheaf of wheat from the ground, on the flats near the hills, which afford their favorite haunts, as early as the revolution, to find one or more of those venomous serpents under it. They were but little dreaded then, especially by the Indians, for if they could get at the wound with their mouth, suction, with their other applications, generally saved the bitten. *The Indians*, said Andrew Loucks, *rubbed their legs with certain roots, to avoid being bitten by rattle-snakes*, and made use of several kinds of roots and plants, in effecting a cure for the bite of those reptiles. The knowledge they had of botany, although limited, was of a practical nature, and enabled them not unfrequently to effect a cure, when a similar application of a scientific mineral compound, would have destroyed. This country, undoubtedly, affords an herb for almost every disease of the climate, and more attention should be paid to the study and medical application of *Botany*. Rattle-snakes diminish rapidly in numbers, if hogs are allowed to run where they infest. They will eat them invariably, with the exception of the head, whenever they take them. There are *individuals*, in fact, who eat those venomous reptiles, and pronounce them palatable. The late Major Van Vechten, of Schoharie, formerly ate them, and at times invited his friends to the banquet. On one occasion, he had several young gentlemen to partake with him, who, as I suppose, were either ambitious to be able to say they had eaten of a "sarpent," or desired to rattle a little as they went through the world. Did they taste exceedingly flavorful, one would suppose the idea of eating a *rattle-snake* would sicken the eater, save in extreme cases of approaching starvation.

The following Indian custom was humorously told the author by George Warner. When Cupid has destroyed the red man's peace of mind, he provides himself with a quantity of corn, and seeks the presence of the ruddy squaw. He then commences snapping kernels at the coy maid he wishes to woo. If she snaps them back, the contract is considered firmly made. If she does not, the lover is led to conclude she "don't take," and leaves

her presence somewhat mortified. If matters proceed favorably and a contract is made, she takes off one garter, and after the marriage ceremony is performed, he probably takes off the other—if, by the by, she has ever had any on.

The Schoharie Indians, says Brown, claimed the lands lying about Schoharie, and made some sales, but were interrupted in those transfers of lands by the Mohawks, who proved that the land given to Karighondontee's wife, at the time her husband settled, was to be no more than would be required to plant as much corn as a squaw could hold in her petticoat; which, he adds, would be reckoned about a skipple. A squaw's petticoat neither has great length or breadth; but the reader will understand that the grain was carried in the garment in the manner of a sack.

But a few years after the Schoharie Germans had their difficulties with Bayard, the royal agent, and Sheriff Adams, they began to secure land not only of the seven partners, but also of the natives, and made transfers among themselves.

A bond in the writer's possession, given for what is unknown, by "John Andrews of Scorre, [Schoharie] to John Lawer [Lawyer,] for twenty-six pounds three shillings, corrant money of New York. Dated the 3d day of May, in the fifth year of our Sovereign Lord George [I.] king of Great Britain, France and Ireland, and in the year of our Lord God, 1720; shows the earliest date of any paper I have met with, that was executed between the early settlers in the Schoharie valley. This date is within ten years of their first arrival. The bond is written in a fair, legible hand, and most of the orthography is correct.

In the early conveyances, lands in the vicinity of the Schoharie Court House, were located at "Fountain's town, Fountain's flats, and Brunen or Bruna dorf." Some of the old deeds bound those lands on the "west, by the Schoharie river, and on the east, on the king's road." The road then ran near the hill east of the old Lutheran parsonage house, which is still standing; leaving nearly all the flats west of it. In ancient patents, the brook

above Middleburgh village is called the Little Schoharie; which name I have chosen to continue.

Many of the Indian sales of lands in Schoharie county, were legalized by the governor and council of the colony. The following paper, which is copied verbatim et literatim, will show the usual form of a *royal permit*:

“By His Excellency the Hon. George Clinton, Captain-General and Governor in Chief of the colony of New
L. S. York, and Territories thereon depending in America,
Vice Admiral of the same and Admiral of the White
Squadron of his Majesty's Fleet.

“To all to whom these presents shall come or may concern,
Greeting:—

“Whereas Johannes Becker, jr., Johannes Schafer, jr., Hendrick Schafer, jr., and Jacobus Schafer, by their humble petition presented unto me and read in Council this Day, have prayed my license to purchase in his Majesty's name, of the native Indian proprietors thereof, six thousand Acres of some vacant Lands, Situate, Lying and being in the County of Albany, on the North side of the Cobelskill, and on the East of the Patent lately granted to Jacob Borst, Jacob C. Teneyck and others near Schoharie: in order to obtain His Majesty's Letters Patent for the same or a proportionate quantity thereof. I have therefore thought fit to give and grant, and I do by and with the Advice of his Majesty's Council, hereby give and grant unto the said Petitioners, full Power, Leave and license to purchase in his Majesty's Name of the Native Indian Proprietors thereof, the Quantity of Six thousand Acres of the vacant Lands aforesaid. Provided the said purchase be made in one year next after the Date hereof, and conformable to a report of a Committee of His Majesty's Council of the second day of December, 1736, on the Memorial of Cadwallader Colden, Esq., representing several Inconveniences arising by the usual Method of purchasing Lands from the Indians. And for so doing this shall be to them a sufficient license.

“Given under my Hand and Seal at Arms, at Fort George, in the City of New York, the sixteenth Day of November, one thousand seven hundred and fifty-two.

“By his Excellency's command, G. CLINTON.”

“GEO. BANYAR, D. Sec'y.”

A conveyance made in December, 1752, of fifteen thousand acres of land in “New Dirlach,” now in the town of Seward—bounds it on “West creek”—west branch of the Cobelskill beginning at a bank called in an Indian conveyance, “*Onc-en-ta-*

dashe." This I suppose to have been the Indian name of the mountain south of Hyndsville. When the county of Tryon was organized, it took in "New Dorlach;" which was embraced in Otsego county on its organization; and subsequently became a part of Schoharie county.

The parties to an indenture, made November 30th, 1753, were Johannes Scheffer, Christ Jan Zehe, Johannes Lawyer, Michael Borst, Johannes Borst, Johan Jost Borst, Michael Hilkinge, William Baird, Jacob Borst, Michael Bowman, Johannes Brown, Barent Keyser, Peter Nicholas Sommer, Johannes Lawyer Ser, Hendrick Heens, and William Brown." It was a purchase of fifteen thousand acres of land on the north side of the "Ostgarrege or Cobelskill, about seven miles westerly from Schoharre."

The author has in his possession, a parchment copy of letters patent, dated March 19, 1754. It was granted in the reign of George II., under the administration of George Clinton as governor, and James De Lancey lieutenant-governor, to John Frederick Bauch, [now written Bouck,] Christian Zehe, Johannes Zehe, Michael Wanner, [Warner,] and Johannes Knisker, [Kneiskern,] "For a certain Track of Land lately purchased by them of the Native Indian proprietors thereof, situate, lying and being in the county of Albany, to the westward of Schoharre, and on the south side of a creek or brook, called by the Indians *Ots-ga-ra-gee*, and by the inhabitants Cobelskill, containing about *four thousand eight hundred* Acres, and further bounded and described as by the Indian purchase thereof, bearing date the Ninth day of November last, might appear." The Patent grants among other things, *Fishings, Fowlings, Hunting and Hawking*; reserving at the same time *Gold and Silver* mines, and "All trees of the Diameter of Twenty-four Inches and upwards at twelve Inches from the ground, for Masts for our Royal Navy. And also all such other trees as may be fit to make planks, knees, and other things necessary for the use of our said Navy:" with the privilege of going on and cutting the timber thus reserved, at any time or in any manner. The following singular sentence appears in the patent. The purchasers, after being individually

named, were, with their heirs and assigns forever, "To be holden of us, our heirs and successors in fee and common socage, as of our Mannor of East Greenwich, in the County of Kent, within our Kingdom of Great Britain, yielding, rendering and paying therefor yearly, and every year forever, unto us our heirs and successors, at our Custom House in Our City of New York, unto our Collector or Receiver General there for the time being, on the feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Mary, commonly called Lady day, the yearly Rent of *two shillings and six pence* for each and every hundred acres of the above granted Lands, and so in proportion for any lesser quantity thereof." Within three years after the date of the patent, the purchasers whose interest was equal, were required "to settle and effectually cultivate at least *three Acres* of every *fifty Acres*, of the land capable of cultivation." The conveyance was to be invalidated by the wanton burning of the growing timber.

About the year 1760, says *Brown*, the Mohawks began to sell large tracts of land around Schoharie, through Sir William Johnson, who was a royal agent of Indian affairs for the six nations of New York, and liberally paid by the British Government. These conveyances to be legal, he adds, were required to be made in his presence, he usually taking good care to secure a valuable interest to himself.

Land was considered of little value among the pioneer settlers of New York, and large tracts were often disposed of for an inconsiderable sum. The following certificate, found among the papers of the late Philip Schuyler of Schoharie, will serve to show from its vague limits, the value set by the owner on a large tract of now valuable land.

"I do hereby certify to have sold to Messrs. Philip Schuyler and Abraham Becker, and their associates, the Flats of the Cook House with an equal quantity of upland near the path going to Ogwage [Oquago].—And I hereby permit them to take up or mark off any quantity of land they may farther think proper, on the west side the said Cook House branch, granted to me, the subscriber, by the Governor and Council of this province of New York.

Albany, 19th June, 1773.

TH. BRADSTREET."

Attached to this certificate is an affidavit made by George Mann in 1818, before Peter Swart, a Judge of the court of common pleas for Schoharie county, which states that in the month of June, 1773, being then at the Indian village of "Orgquago," he saw "Philip Schuyler pay to the Chiefs of the Indian tribe of the same name, in behalf of John Bradstreet, the sum of one hundred dollars, which he understood to be money received by them in consideration of a deed for a certain tract of land given by the said Chiefs to the said Bradstreet, and which land was situated on the west branch of the Delaware river, commonly called the Koke-house branch.* He adds that Alexander Campbell, John H. Becker and David Becker, were also present at the time.

I have before remarked that the Schoharie people owned slaves. Many of them were either purchased in the New England states, or of New England men. A certificate of the sale of a black girl about *thirteen years of age*, given on the 7th day of July, 1762, by "John McClister of Connecticut, to Jacob Lawyer of Schoharie," for the sum of *sixty pounds*, [$\$150$,] New York currency, will probably show the average value of female slaves at that day. At a later period, able bodied male slaves often sold as high as $\$250$. When slaves were purchased out of the Colony, a duty was required to be paid on them, as the following certificate of the Mayor of Albany will show.

"Theas are to Certify, y^t Nine negro men and women has been Imported Into y^e County of Albany from New England, and according to an Act of y^e Governor, y^e Council, and the generall Assembly; William Day has paid y^e Duty for said negro men and women: witness my hand this twentieth Day of Aug^t. 1762.
VOLKERT P. DOUW, Mayor."

Five of the above mentioned slaves were sold at Schoharie.

While New York was a British province, public roads were called "The King's Highways," and were kept in repair by a tax levied by officers under the crown. Individuals were not compelled at that period to fence in their lands along the highways, but where the line fence between neighbors crossed them,

* Koke is the Dutch of cook—to prepare to eat.

they placed gates. This was a source of constant vexation to the traveler, who often complained that more obstructions of the kind were stretched across the road, than necessity required. Accordingly, to remedy the evil, a legislative act was passed, by which those obstructions could only be placed across the *King's road* by a legal permit; signed by several of his Majesty's Justices of the peace. The traveler was annoyed by gates across the highway in thickly settled communities in the Mohawk and Schoharie valleys, for many years after the American revolution.

John Lawyer, named in the bond of 1720, and the father of one of the first white children born in Schoharie, was one of the principal settlers at Brunadorf: and was the first merchant among those Germans—trading near the present residence of Andrew Beller, half a mile south of the Court House. He is said to have been a flax-hatcheler in Germany: and we must suppose, from the state of his finances on his arrival in the Schoharie valley, that he commenced a very limited business. The natives were among his most profitable customers; as he bartered blankets, Indian trinkets, calicoes, ammunition, rum, &c., with them, for valuable furs, dressed deer-skins, and other commodities of the times. He was one of the best informed among the Germans who settled the county; and before his death became an extensive land-holder. He was quite a business man and a useful citizen, aiding many who purchased land in making their payments; and acquired the reputation of a fair and honorable dealer.

He became a widower when about eighty years old, and married a widow in New York city. Arriving at Albany he sent word to have one of his sons come after him: but they were so offended to think he should marry at that age, that neither of them would go. One Dominick took the happy couple to Schoharie; where, we take it for granted, they spent the honeymoon. It has been stated that Lawyer had several children by this late marriage. Judge Brown assured the author he had indeed, but that they were many years old when he married their mother. A well executed family portrait of this *father* of the

Lawyers, in the fashion of that day, is now to be seen at the dwelling of the late Wm. G. Michaels, near the Court House. It was painted in New York, and tells credibly for the state of the *fine arts* at that period.

A second John Lawyer, who usually wrote his given name Johannes (the German of John), a son of the one mentioned above, succeeded his father in the mercantile business. He became a good surveyor, and surveyed much land in and around Schoharie county. He was also an extensive land-holder, owning at least twenty-five thousand acres of land, and his name appears in very many conveyances made in that county before the year 1760.

I have before me a copy of the *will* of this man, which was dated March 10th, 1760: by which it appears he was then a merchant. He had three sons and two daughters, and his will so disposed of his large estate, as to be equally distributed on the death of his widow, to the surviving children and the lawful heirs of the deceased ones.

Few parents at the present day in Schoharie county, imitate the commendable example of this wealthy man, and divide their property *equally* between sons and daughters. The latter, who are by nature the most helpless, are frequently unprovided for, and while a son or sons are enjoying the rich inheritance of a "wise father," a worthy daughter is sometimes compelled, on the death of her parents, either to marry against her own good sense and inclination, a man unworthy of her; or feel herself really dependant on the *charity* of those from whom she should not be compelled to ask it.

Johannes Lawyer was succeeded by a son, his namesake, in the mercantile business. He was also a surveyor, and transacted no little business. Lawrence Lawyer, one of his sons, who was still living in Cobelskill in 1837, informed me that some person in New York presented his father with a small cannon while in that city purchasing goods, a short time previous to the French war: and that during that war, whenever the Schoharie Indians,

who were engaged with the Mohawks under General, afterwards Sir Wm. Johnson, returned home with the scalps of ten or fifteen of the enemy, *this cannon was fired for joy*. Thus we perceive that the very cruel Indian custom of *scalping*, condemned in the savages during the Revolution about twenty years after, the whites had approved in the French war, and demonstrated that approval by the discharge of cannon. Can we blame the unlettered savage for continuing a custom *his fathers*—indeed *we ourselves* have taught him to think fair and honorable, by our own public approval and celebration? Ought we not rather to pity the degraded, injured Indian; and amid blushes, censure ourselves for encouraging his love of *cruelty* instead of *tender mercy*?

I learned from this old patriot, who was one of the early settlers of Cobelskill, the origin of the name *Punch-kill*. His grandfather took a patent of lands adjoining this stream: and on running out the lines in making a survey, *punch* was made and freely drank on the premises, on which account the brook was called *Punch-kill*, and has been so called ever since. This kill is in the northeast part of the town, and falls into the stream of that name.

John L. Lawyer, who was a nephew of the second Schoharie merchant, was *learned out*, according to a phrase of the times, having received a share of his education in Boston, and proved a very correct surveyor. He was rather eccentric, and perhaps was not in all respects as happily married, as it is the good fortune of some men to be. An anecdote related of him which tends to show his character, is as follows: He had been accustomed for a long time to occupy a high chair at the table while eating. A grandson of his coming home after a long absence, who was a great favorite with his grandmother, she insisted on his having the high chair at the festive board. The old gentleman put up with the treatment for a few days, but at length growing impatient at such improper favoritism, he entered his dwelling as the table was setting, with a saw, and before any one

could stay proceedings, he raised the table and sawed off its legs. "Now," said he to his wife, "*your favorite can have the high chair.*" The old lady cast her eyes on the sorry picture which the dishes in fragments on the floor presented, and began to storm—but it was of no use—the husband kept his temper. His voice was not *for war*. He went directly and procured a new set of dishes, and ever after he had no difficulty in occupying such a seat at his own table as he chose.

It was formerly customary, not only in Schoharie, but in almost every county in the state, to provide refreshments at *funerals*. Indeed, within twenty years, the custom of providing liquor on such occasions has been in vogue, and the bearers and friends of the deceased were expected to return to the house of mourning after the burial, and drink. Neither was it at all uncommon for people in those days to go home from a funeral drunk: but the barbarous and unfeeling custom of passing the intoxicating bowl on such occasions, has yielded to a better spirit. It is said that John Lawyer, the second one mentioned in this chapter, kept a barrel of wine for several years before his death to be drank at his funeral; that it was carried out on that occasion in pails, freely drank, and many were drunk of it. Cakes were carried round at such times in large baskets, and in some instances a funeral appeared more like a festival than the solemn sepulture of the dead. The old people give a reason somewhat plausible for the introduction of such a custom in this county. Its inhabitants were sparsely settled over a large territory, and many had to go a great distance to attend funerals,—and as all could not be expected to eat a regular meal from home, those extra provisions were made for friends present from remote sections. A custom of that kind once introduced, *even if at the time justifiable*, it is easy to perceive might be continued in after years, until it became obnoxious to sympathy and highly reprehensible.

The following is the copy of a receipt, evidently in the hand writing of the second mentioned John Lawyer, his name being written as the contraction of Johannes. It was doubtless given as it purports, for liquor drank at a funeral.

"*Schoherie, March 29, 1738.*

"Then Received of John Schuyler the sum of Twenty Shilings for the five galing [gallons] of Rum at the Bearing [burying] of Maria Bratt. Recd by me.
JOHS. LAWYER."

The Schoharie Indians had but few serious difficulties with the early white settlers. Judge Brown mentions in his pamphlet that a squaw once shot a man on the sabbath, while returning from Church. The Indians often had personal broils among themselves, and generally settled them in their own savage way. Brown also states that in his time he saw one William, a son of Jan, stab and kill another Indian at the house of David Becker, in Weiser's dorf. An eye-witness of the act informed the author, that the Indian killed was called John Coy. David Becker then kept a public house, which stood on the present site of the parsonage house belonging to the brick church in Middleburgh. John had a child in his arms in the bar-room, and was asked by William, another Indian, to drink with him. The former declined drinking, and walked out of the room upon a piazza in front of the house. William soon after followed him out and buried the blade of a long knife in his back—which he did not attempt to draw out—and departed. John died almost instantly. The cause of this assassination informant did not know: it is doubtless to be attributed to the red man's curse—*alcohol*.

Mrs. Van Slyck related the following traditionary story, which serves to illustrate the Indian character. At a house which stood on the farm now owned by Henry Vrooman, and contiguous to Wilder Hook, about the year 1750, one Indian stabbed another on the threshold of the door to the entrance into the upper part of it. The deed was committed in the evening, and was the result of a former quarrel. The tribe took little notice of the act, but when the corpse of the murdered man was about to be lowered into the grave, the father of the murderer required his son to get into it to dig one end deeper. He did so, and while standing there, the father sunk a tomahawk into his brains. He was laid down in the *narrow house* with his implements of war beside him—the other victim placed upon the body of his murderer, and both

buried together. Thus bodies which in life were rendered so hateful to each other by the savage spirits which controlled them, mingled into one common earth after death, by the fiendish act of a father ; who, by endeavoring to punish the believed wrong of a son, became himself the most guilty of the two. However unnatural an act like this may seem, it was by no means uncommon among the unlettered sons of the forest. The father often assumed the responsibility of punishing the son, and the son the father, for misdemeanors which might have a tendency to disgrace the avenger, even to the taking of life.

The following anecdote will show another peculiarity of the Indian character. One of the Schoharie Chiefs, named Lewis, is said to have gone to battle—probably in the French war,—scalped a squaw, taken her home as his prisoner, and afterwards made her his wife and the mother of his children.

The Indians were in the annual habit, to considerable extent, of taking up a temporary residence near corn fields—when the corn became eatable,—proving unprofitable neighbors to the whites.