

THE MALISEETS.

The People Who Inhabited the Up River Countries 300 Years Ago, as Described by Champlain. Cadillac, John Gyles, etc. (No. 4.)

When in the course of the sixteenth century the coasts of ancient Acadie became tolerably familiar to early European voyagers, it was found the country was not entirely destitute of inhabitants. True, it was very sparsely peopled and such were the migratory habits of the aborigines that it was difficult to form any idea either of their numbers in the abstract or of the population of their principal villages. The charm of life in the eyes of the native Indian appeared to consist in frequent changes both of occupation and of his place of abode. At one time the attractions of the sea side prevailed, at another he preferred the island waters. At one time he sought for new hunting grounds, at another he tilled his corn fields or engaged in fishing. At one time flotillas of bark canoes skimmed over the lakes bearing the dusky warriors against the enemies of their tribe; at another the breaking out of pestilence broke up the old camping grounds and scattered the savages in a dozen different directions.

Many and strange were the tales that the lively imaginations of the old navigators invented as regards the habits and customs of the American Indians. Of all narrators Champlain is by far the most painstaking and reliable. From him we learn that the Indians of the St. John river were formerly called the Etmenquois or Etchemins. They spoke a dialect of the Algonquin language quite distinct from that of the Iroquois and other races westward of the Kennebec. The Etchemins possessed the country from the St. John to the Kennebec. They were territorially divided into four tribes, (1) the St. John river Indians or Maliseets proper, (2) the Passamaquoddy, (3) the Penobscots and (4) the Canibas or Kennebec Indians. The common name of Abenakis or Wabenaki is frequently applied to this tribal group. The identity of language and customs of these tribes, together with the fact that the St. John river Indians roamed at pleasure over the country from the Madawaska to the Penobscot and even farther westward has led many authorities to speak of all the Indians of that wide spread region as *Maliseets*. For example Villebon the French Governor of Acadia, than whom few were more intimately associated with the Indians, in writing from his fort at the mouth of the Nashwaak, September 2nd, 1694, to M. de Lagny says, "The Maliseets begin at the river St. John and extend inland as far as Riviere du Loup and along the sea shore occupying Passamaquoddy, Machias, Mount Desert and Penobscot and all the rivers along the coast."

The popular idea regarding the existence of a very large number of Indians upon the St. John river in early times is I believe not warranted in point of fact. It is impossible to believe the Indians from their habits and customs could ever have been very numerous. The hunter of necessity was forced to draw his subsistence from a very wide range of territory. The Indians living upon the St. John river were often obliged in the beginning of winter to break up into small parties for the better pursuit of game and were sometimes subjected to dreadful suffering from want. No people following their mode of life and frequently engaged in warfare could become very numerous.

Champlain accompanied DeMonts to Acadia in 1604. In his very graphic narrative he relates with great exactness and minuteness all that he observed. His description of the Indians of the Passamaquoddy region is of special interest to us because they were in their habits, language, etc., identical with the St. John river Indians. "During the winter," says Champlain, "in the deepest snows the savages hunt elk (moose), and other animals on which they live most of the time. And unless the snow is very deep they scarcely get rewarded for their pains since they cannot capture anything except by a very great effort, which is the reason for their enduring and suffering much. When they do not hunt they live on a shell-fish called the cockle. They clothe themselves in winter with good furs of beaver and elk. The women make all the garments, but not so exactly but that you can see the flesh under the arm-pits, because they have not ingenuity enough to fit them better. When they go hunting they use a kind of snowshoe twice as large as those hereabouts, which they attach to the soles of their feet, and walk thus over the snow without sinking in, the women and children as well as the men. They search for the track of animals, which having found, they follow until they get a sight of the creature, when they shoot at it with their bows or kill it by means of daggers attached to the end of a short pike, which is very easily done, as the animals cannot walk on the snow without sinking in. Then, the women and children come up, erect a hut, and they give themselves to feasting. Afterwards they proceed in search of other animals and thus they pass the winter. This is the mode of life in winter of these people which seems to me a very miserable one."

The St. John river Indians had learned to supplement their precarious supply of pro-

visions obtained from the forest and the stream by cultivating to some extent the fertile soil of the intervals and islands. Well tilled corn fields were a marked feature in the settlement at Meductic and of this we have abundant proof in the narrative of John Gyles who lived six years a captive with the Indians at that place. A French writer, Cadillac, also mentions the fact. Writing in 1693 he says, "The Maliseets are well shaped and tolerably warlike; they attend to the cultivation of the soil and grow the most beautiful Indian corn; their fort is at Meductic."

Champlain's narrative suffices to show that corn was raised on the St. John river intervals three hundred years ago in very much the same way that it is raised today. Describing the Indian method he says, "In the place of ploughs they use an instrument of very hard wood shaped like a spade. We saw their Indian corn which they raise in gardens. Planting three or four kernels in one place they then heap up a quantity of earth, then three feet distant they plant as much more and thus in succession. With this they put in each hill three or four beans. When they grow up they interlace with the corn which reaches to the height of from five to six feet, and they keep the ground very free from weeds. We saw there many squashes and pumpkins and tobacco which they likewise cultivate. They plant their corn in May and gather it in September."

The squashes, pumpkins and tobacco as well as the corn, it need scarcely be said, were indigenous to America although brought from more southern latitudes. Roger Williams records a curious Indian tradition that the crow brought them an Indian grain of corn in one ear and in the other ear an Indian bean from the field of their great god *Kautanowit* in the south west land. The tobacco above referred to was a smaller and more hardy species than the *Nicotiana tabacum* now cultivated in warmer climates. Jacques Cartier described it in 1535 and we give his description in the quaint words of Hakluyt's translation: "There groweth also a certain kind of herbe, whereof in sommer they make a great provision for all the year. First they cause it to be dried in the sunne, then weare it about their neckes wrapped in a little beasts skinn made like a little bagge, with a hollow peece of stone or wood like a pipe. Then when they please they make powder of it and then put it in one of the ends of the said and laying a cole of fire upon it, at the other ende sucke so long, that they fill their bodies full of smoke till that it cometh out of their mouth and nostrils even as out of the tunnel of a chimney. They say that this doth keepe them warme and in health; they never goe without some of it about them. We ourselves have tried the same and having put it in our mouthes it seemed almost as hot as pepper."

John Gyles in his narrative describes the planting of corn on the intervals adjoining the old Meductic fort. After planting, the Indians went fishing and to look for and dig roots till the corn was fit to weed. After weeding they took a second tour on the same errand and then returned to till the corn. After hilling they went up the river to take salmon and other fish, some of which they dried for future use. In fishing they used chiefly torch and spear. There were a number of famous places which they frequented, one of these being the "fishing bar" just below Bull's Island, another the "Grand bar" seven miles above Woodstock. When the corn was filled with milk the Indians again returned from fishing to dry it for winter use. The process was as follows: The ears were boiled in large kettles till the corn was pretty hard; it was then shelled from the cob with clam shells, and thoroughly dried in the sun. Gyles says the kernels were then no larger than a pea, and would keep for years. Some of the corn was stored in holes dug in dry ground lined with bark. The remainder was carried up river on the next winter's hunting.

In the next two or three articles I shall try to throw additional light on the customs and mode of life of the first inhabitants of the upper St. John.

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A New Source of Energy.

Mr. Berthelou, the illustrious French chemist, suggests as a subject for the attention of the next generation of engineers the substitution of the the heat of the sun, or the central heat, as a source of energy, for that derived from coal. The sinking of a shaft three or four kilometers deep is not beyond the power of modern and especially of future engineering. At such a depth, water would be found with a temperature of 160 degrees to 200 degrees Cent., which would develop enough power for any number of machines. This power would be available in any part of the globe, and many thousands of years would pass away before this store of energy would suffer an appreciable diminution.

A Curious Disease.

There is a curious disease which prevails in Senegal and along the western interior of Africa, the symptoms of which is a gradually increasing torpor, until the victim can no longer keep awake, and falls into a deep sleep from which nothing can rouse him. In this state he remains, perhaps, for months, until death overtakes him. The disease is endemic along the valley of the Congo, but seems only to attack natives. It is invariably mortal. Mr. Forbes, in the *Lancet*, describes several cases of this kind, and mentions that the cause is unknown. It has been suggested that a poisonous fungus growing on the native grain crops might be responsible, but so far there is no evidence whatever to support this explanation.—*London Public Opinion.*

The Telephone in War.

The telephone seems destined to play an important part on the battle-fields of the future. Experiments were recently made abroad with a bimetallic wire, made up of a core of steel surrounded by a coating of copper. Reels carrying 10,000 feet of this wire can be easily carried by soldiers as a part of their equipments. The entire apparatus necessary for a line one mile long can be by the use of this wire be made to weigh only 5½ pounds. The infinite and valuable uses to which such an instrument could be applied will be obvious to every one.—*Invention (London).*

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2.40 P. M.—MIXED—Week days: For Vanceboro, Montreal, etc.
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