

CUSTOMS OF THE INDIANS AT MEDUCTIC.

Feasts.—The Bill of Fare.—Mode of Producing Fire.—Cooking.—Dog Feast Before War.—Marriages and Funerals.

(No. 11.)

The St. John river Indians, though improvident enough in all conscience, seem to have been a little in advance of some other tribes. They were accustomed to preserve their meat by taking the flesh from the bones and drying it in smoke, by which means it was kept sound for months or even years without salt. Their way of preserving corn when in the milk has already been described. They were also accustomed to store the corn when ripe in *caches* or deep holes in the earth lined with bark. Sometimes, also, they laid in a stock of dried eels. Gyles has left us an account of an Indian feast. "If," says he, "you dislike the bill of fare, stay at home. The ingredients are fish, flesh, or Indian corn and beans boiled together, sometimes hasty pudding made of pounded corn. Whenever, and as often as these are plenty, an Indian boils four or five large kettles full and sends a message to each wigwam door, who exclaims *kud menscoorebah*, that is 'I come to bring you to a feast.' The man within asks whether he must take a spoon or a knife in his dish, which he always carries with him. They appoint two or three young men to mess out to each man his portion according to the number of his family at home. This is done with utmost exactness."

The subordinate condition of the women is shown in the fact that they were excluded from the feasting, and it was not until the wants of their lords were satisfied that a young attendant called from the door way, *saescomook*, meaning 'come and fetch.' "Immediately," says Gyles, "each squaw goes to her husband and take what he has left, which she carries home and eats with her children. For neither married women nor any youth under twenty are allowed to be present; but old widow squaws and captive men may sit at the door. The Indian men continue in the wigwam relating their warlike exploits, others something comical, others narrating their hunting exploits. The seniors give maxims of prudence and grave council to the young men; and though everyone's speech be agreeable to the tune of his own fancy, yet they confine themselves to rule and but one speaks at a time. After every man has told his story, one rises up, sings a feast song and others succeed alternately as the company sees fit."

It appears from the description given by Parkman in "the Jesuits in North America" that the feasts of the St. John river Indians were not unlike those of the Hurons in Upper Canada. Parkman describes a feast of the latter at the village of Contarrea in 1635 where thirty kettles were on the fires and twenty deer and four bears were served up. A messenger addressed the desired guests with the concise summons, "Come and eat." Each man took his dish and spoon and repaired to the scene of festivity, ranged himself with the rest of the guests all squatted on the earthen floor. The giver of the feast proclaimed in a loud voice the contents of each kettle in turn and at each announcement the Indians responded in unison, Ho! The attendants filled with their ladies the bowls of all the guests. There was talking, laughing, jesting, singing and smoking; and at times the entertainment lasted the entire day.

"Necessity is the mother of invention. If an Indian loses his fire, he can presently take two sticks, one harder than the other, the drier the better, and in the softer one make a hollow or socket in which one end of the hardest stick being inserted, then holding the softest piece firm between the knees he whirls it round like a drill and fire will kindle in a few minutes."

"If they have lost or left their kettle, it is but putting their victuals into a birch dish, leaving a vacancy in the middle, filling it with water and putting in hot stones alternately. They will thus thoroughly boil the toughest neck of beef."

"When the Indians determine on war or are entering upon a particular expedition they kill a number of their dogs, burn off the hair and cut them to pieces, leaving only one dog's head whole. The rest of the flesh they boil and make a fine feast of it. Then the dog's head that was left whole is scorched till the nose and lips have shrunk from the teeth, leaving them bare and grinning. This done they fasten it on a stick, and the Indian who is supposed to be chief in the expedition takes the head into his hand and sings a warlike song in which he mentions the town they design to attack and the principal man in it, threatening that in a few days he will carry that man's head and scalp in his hand in the same manner. When the chief has finished singing, he so places the dog's head as to grin at him who he supposes will go his second, who, if he accepts, takes the head in his hand and sings, but if he refuses to go, he turns the teeth to another; and thus from one to another till they have enlisted their company."

"The Indians imagine that dog's flesh makes them bold and courageous. I have

seen an Indian split a dog's head with a hatchet, take out the brains hot, and eat raw with the blood running down his jaws."

We turn with relief from this brutal picture to consider the domestic life of the Indians.

"If parents have a daughter marriageable they seek out a husband for her who is a good hunter. If she has been well educated to make *Monoodah* (Indian bags), birch dishes, to lace snowshoes, make Indian shoes, string wampum belts, sew birch canoes, and boil the kettle, she is esteemed a lady of fine accomplishments. If the man sought out for her husband have a gun and ammunition, a canoe, spear and hatchet, a monoodah, a crooked knife, looking glass and paint, a pipe, tobacco and knot-bowl to toss a kind of dice in, he is accounted a gentleman of plentiful fortune. Whatever the new married man procures the first year belongs to his wife's parents."

"If a young Indian determines to marry, his relations and the French priest advise him to a girl. He goes into the wigwam where she is and looks on her. If he likes her appearance he tosses a stick or chip into her lap, which she takes, and with a reserved side look views the person who sent it; yet handles the chip with admiration as though she wondered from whence it came. If she likes him she throws the chip to him with a modest smile, and then nothing is wanting but a ceremony, with the priest to consummate a marriage. But, if she dislikes her suitor she with a surly countenance throws the chip aside and he goes no more there."

It may be added to what Gyles here states that all writers agree in commending the modesty and chastity of the Maliseet Indians. Not only were they faithful in their domestic relations, but there is no instance on record of their having ever violated the person of a female captive. It is a fact that should be remembered to their credit even by those who most abhor their bloodthirstiness and cruelty. Their conduct in this respect was in marked contrast to that of the Hurons and other tribes to the westward who were grossly immoral.

In the case of a death the funeral ceremony seems to have varied in some degree according to the rank and station of the deceased, and doubtless the old heathen ceremonies were considerably modified by the influence of Christianity. But the custom that prevailed on the upper St. John two hundred years ago is thus described by Gyles.

"When a relation dies; in the still evening a squaw will walk on the highest land near her abode and with a loud and mournful voice will exclaim, 'O *hovee, hovee hovee*' with a long mournful tone to each *hovee* for a long time together. After the mourning season is over the relations of the deceased make a feast to wipe off tears. If the deceased was the wife of an Indian the relatives consult together and choose a squaw (doubtless a widow) and send her to the widower and if he likes her he takes her to be his wife, and if not he sends her back and the relations choose and send till they find one that he approves of."

L'Escarbot, the historian, gives an account of the funeral obsequies of Pannonicia a Micmac chief killed by the *Armonchiquois* in 1607. He was brought back to the St. Croix where the savages wept over his body and embalmed it. Then they carried it to Port Royal where for eight days they howled lustily over his remains. Then they went to his hut and burnt it up with its contents dogs included, so as to save quarrelling among his relations. He was finally buried near Cape Sable along with pipes, knives, axes, other skins and pots.

Before we close our consideration of the aboriginal inhabitants of the upper St. John, brief reference should be made to some of their curious traditions and superstitions and these will form the substance of our next article.

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Western Freight Rates.

The commission appointed by the Dominion Government to inquire into freight rates and other questions affecting transportation has gone West to begin its investigations. Although the matter with which it has to deal has been declared to be of the first importance, there has been a lack of testimony so far in Winnipeg. The inquiry was to have commenced Wednesday last, but the Board of trade being unprepared to proceed with the case the commission will probably move on to Morris, Man. In the rural districts no doubt abundant evidence will be forthcoming, since the appeal to Parliament which elicited the commission was signed chiefly by farmers. The complaint made was that the rates charged by the Canadian Pacific railway are unreasonable, and the prayer of the petition asked the Government to seek by legislation and otherwise to secure a reduction, as well as to aid the construction of competing lines. In answer to the indictment the railway company courted the fullest investigation, but denied that its charges were excessive. It has since the proceedings were instituted, made several reductions of rates, which go to show that it is not beyond the reach of public opinion even if it is protected by its contract from Parliamentary pressure. The agreement between the company and the people, as represented by the Government, prevents any Federal interference with freight rates until the railway's annual profits shall equal ten per cent. of the capital invested. Large as this may seem it is lower than the margin fixed under the General Railway Act, which sanctions a dividend of fifteen per cent. before rates may be curtailed by Government. In the case of the Canadian Pacific it is argued that its stock does not represent the same amount of capital, since the shares were sold to original buyers much below par.

This question is not likely to arise at present or for many years to come, because few railroads pay dividends, and fewer pay large ones. This commission now in Manitoba cannot relieve the government of any responsibility. It is merely a more convenient mode of investigating a supposed grievance. The rule is that such complaints must be stated before the railway committee of the privy council at Ottawa. It was thought, however, that in this instance it would be cheaper and more expeditious for a commission to go and take the evidence than for the witnesses to be brought to the capital. Primarily the question to be inquired into is whether the freights are excessive as compared with the charges made in other countries for similar services. But along with this must be considered the cost of carrying the freight, a point which has an important bearing upon the request for increased facilities. If the Canadian Pacific cannot profitably haul grain at a lower figure it can hardly be contended that additional competition would bring about a permanent reduction. Railways must be made to pay, for they are commercial enterprises. The question under investigation has therefore many phases, and is in the West, where the farmer finds that more than one-third of his labor represents the cost of transportation, a very real one. Nothing would do more to retard Western development than the idea that the people are harshly treated by the railways. It would discourage investment. Should the evidence sustain the charges, not in a few details, but in their general effect, the force of public opinion will be sufficient to make it decidedly unpleasant, in the West at all events, for any government that sits by with folded hands. An attempt to maintain exorbitant rates would force the country into new expenditures for competing routes.—*Toronto Mail.*

A Patriot.

He said he thrilled with patriot zeal for his beloved nation. The grand, old glorious commonwealth thrilled him with admiration. He loved his land with love divine, such love as patriots cherish, his life for it he would resign, yield up his breath and perish.

He loved with fervor unconfin'd its laws and constitution, and all his heartstrings were entwined around them in profusion. But then his wrath couldn't be appeas'd, his oaths were loud to hear, because his taxes were increased some thirteen cents a year.—*N. Y. World.*

Rev. D. M. Mihell.

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"I am so sorry," wailed the young wife; "you see, we haven't been married long, and my husband's mother has always cooked for him, and when I heard him talking in his sleep about a jack-pot I thought I'd get one, for he mentions it so often he must be used to it. Could you tell me what they cook in it?"

"Greens, ma'am," said the grocer, and he sent her to the tin store in the next block.—*Detroit Free Press.*

RAILWAY TIME TABLE.

DEPARTURES.

6.15 A. M.—MIXED—Week days: For Presque Isle and points North.
11.32 A. M.—EXPRESS—Week days: For Houlton, McAdam Junction, St. Stephen, Fredericton, St. John, Vanceboro, Bangor, Boston, &c.
12.30 P. M.—MIXED—Week days: For Fredericton, &c., via Gibson Branch.
1.05 P. M.—EXPRESS—Week days: For Presque Isle, Edmundston, and all points North.
2.40 P. M.—MIXED—Week days: For Vanceboro, Montreal, etc.
8.00 P. M.—MIXED—Week days: For Houlton, McAdam Junction, St. Stephen, St. John, Bangor, Boston, &c.

ARRIVALS.

6.15 A. M.—MIXED—Except Monday, from St. John, St. Stephen, Vanceboro, Bangor, etc.
10.56 A. M.—MIXED—Week days: From Fredericton, etc., via Gibson Branch.
11.00 A. M.—From McAdam Junction, etc.
11.32 P. M.—EXPRESS—Week days: From Presque Isle, etc.
1.05 P. M.—EXPRESS—Week days: From St. John, St. Stephen, Bangor, Montreal, etc.
7.45 P. M.—MIXED—Week days: From Edmundston, Presque Isle, etc.

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