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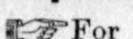
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LAST WORDS ABOUT THE MALISEETS.

Origin of the Name "Maliseet."—Are the Indians Decreasing in Number?—Indian Families. The Gills, Tomars, Pauls.—Moses H. Perley and the Indians.

[No 67]

In this series of articles on our early history the writer, in speaking of the St. John river Indians as the *Maliseets*, has adopted that form of spelling which has been approved by modern students of Indian lore, and which most neatly accords with the proper pronunciation of the word. Apparently the Indians of the Upper St. John have always called themselves *Maliseets*. The earliest French authorities (for example Gov. Villebon in the journal which he kept of his doings at Fort Nashwaak in 1693) term them *Malicetes* which it will be noticed is almost identical with the Latin form *Malicite*, engraved on the stone tablet of the church at Meductic village by Father Jean Loyard in the year 1717. Either of these forms pronounced in French fashion is in sound practically identical with our English "Maliseet."

Col. John Allan in the journal in which he recorded his operations on the river St. John in the year 1777, varies the spelling somewhat and speaks of the Indians of the river as belonging to the *Narashet* or *Merisheet* tribe. Dr. Gesner and Moses H. Perley have adopted the form *Melicete* or *Milicete*, and in this they have been followed by the majority of our provincial writers. Mr. Hannay, however, in his History of Acadia, retains the spelling of Villebon, namely *Malicite*. The pronunciation of the most intelligent modern Indians supports the form *Maliseet*.

The word according to Dr. Ganong is derived from *Mal-see-jik* which signifies "he speaks badly." The term was applied to them by their Micmac neighbor probably merely to indicate the Micmacs regarded them as a tribe foreign to their own although some have supposed it to signify that the Maliseet were a composite race and spoke a patois or broke dialect.

It has been commonly supposed that the Indians as a race are dwindling and that they were once far more numerous than now. In the light of history there does not appear any very good ground for this assumption; there are probably as many Indians in New Brunswick at the present day as there ever were. Hannay says, "The Malicetes have not decreased in number for the past two centuries at least," and he fortifies his statement by a review of the historic evidence. The idea that the Indians as a race are dying out had its origin largely with Moses H. Perley who in his hand book of New Brunswick says:—"That they are steadily decreasing is beyond a doubt, and this in a great degree is owing to the ravages made among them by small pox and typhus fever, and among children by measles, hooping cough and scarlet fever and other diseases to which children are subject." Mr. Perley states that as Indian commissioner he in 1841 made an enumeration of the Indians in the province and found them to be 1,377; he believed that in 1854, when his hand book was issued, they did not number 1,000 souls and were still decreasing. The last dominion census however shows that the Indians of New Brunswick now number 1,521 souls, which so far from being a decrease shows an increase in the last half century. According to Mr. Perley the Maliseets fifty years ago numbered 442, in the last census their numbers are given as 682, a considerable increase. With the addition of those of their tribe living in the province of Quebec and in the adjoining State of Maine the Maliseets number at the present day about 1,200 souls. Of course they form a very insignificant portion of the total population still their numbers are slowly increasing. The cause of this is doubtless owing in part to their improved manner of living and probably still more to the admixture of French blood. The Indians have always been a composite race. One of the effects of the mutual intercourse of the tribes of Acadia during the French wars was a large number of intermarriages. Some of the Maliseets of the St. John, for example, became connected by marriage with the Micmacs of Miramichi and the Abenaki of St. Francis. Through one of these marriages the name of Gill became a common one among the Indians. The origin of the name is curious enough. Samuel Gill, a white boy aged 14 years, was taken prisoner by Indians near Greenfield on the Connecticut river, about the year 1707, and carried to St. Francis where he grew up among the French and adopted their language and religion. At the age of 22 he married a girl who had been captured at the same time and place with himself. Their children married not only among the French but amongst the Indians. They were a prolific stock and, according to Parkman, their descendants in the year 1866 numbered some 952 individuals in whose veins French, English and Abenaki blood were mixed in every conceivable proportion. Many of the citizens of Woodstock will remember Maloney Gill and his brother Joe. The former was a remarkably intelligent Indian, strong, active, and possessed of the finest physique. He was an excellent hunter, fisherman, and canoe man, and his services were often sought by sportsmen. He frequently hired with the farmers and there were few mowers who could cut so broad and clean a swath as Maloney Gill, or handle the axe with equal skill and vigor. He was regarded as quite a weather prophet and his advice sought in haying time. But alas, for Maloney's intemperate habits spoiled all, and when he had imbibed too much of the white man's "fire water" he became the terror of the neighborhood. Joe Gill was equally fond of rum, but in every other way a great contrast to his brother, but his wife "Mag" was a perfect Xantippe, and drunk or sober Joe was afraid of her. Instances in which the squaws were able to be anything better than the drudges of their liege lords were few indeed, but it is the case of "Joe" and "Mag" we have an exception to the general rule.

The Tomah family is well remembered in Woodstock. Last autumn a very intelligent Indian woman was selling ornamental baskets at Westfield, informed the writer she had lived much of life in Woodstock. Her uncle was commonly known as "Old Tomar" or "Doctor Tomar," he lived to the age of nearly a hundred years. His bent spare figure used to be a familiar object about the streets of Woodstock and along the country road side. It would be hard to count the number of baskets the old man carried on his back to town for sale. Old Tomar used to say that Pierre Tomah, the old chief who was his ancestor, could remember when Bull's Island was a part of the mainland, the Meduxnakik finding its way into the St. John by a channel around the head of the island and the Upham Creek making its exit through the opening which may still be seen near the foot of the island. It will be noticed that this opening is directly opposite the present outlet (on Mr. C. L. Smith's farm) of which in ancient days it was no doubt nearly a continuation. Hundreds of acres of the most valuable intervals on the upper St. John have been washed away by the freshets.

About the year 1877 Dr. Tomar came to see his old friend Charles Raymond, then in his 90th year and confined to his bed with what proved his last illness, and the pleasure of meeting appeared to be mutual. As long as the writer can remember the two were accustomed from time to time to compare their ages, and Tomah was always one year younger showing that the old Indian kept his "notch stick" well.

Another well known and very intelligent Indian was Newell Paul who lived until a few years ago. In his young days he was a wonderfully strong man, and few were his equal with the spear and the paddle. His wife was one of the most clever of the Indian women at ornamental bead work. She it was that ornamented the coat that Moses H. Perley wore when he visited England in 1840 in the character of an Indian chief, and in which he was presented to Her Majesty Queen Victoria. In his early life Mr. Perley was very fond of the woods and when but a youth used to visit the Indian encampment on the upper St. John for the purchase of furs, which he paid for in silver dollars. For many years in after life he spent his holidays in fishing and shooting and so kept up and enlarged his friendship with the Indians. Newell Paul was often his guide on these occasions. The Maliseets made him their "white chief" and he used for many years to act as agent between them and the government. His son, Henry F. Perley, Esq., of Ottawa, in a letter to the writer of this article says, "I have my father's commission as Wunjeet Sachem of the whole Micmac nation, dated 7th September, 1841, and there was a similar commission as Chief Sachem of the Milicete tribe of about the same date, but I have every reason to believe that it was burned in the fire in St. John in 1877. I am personally aware that in 1839 he was a chief, and can well remember his appearance when clad in his dress, etc., which he wore on a few occasions. I have in my possession a silver medal three inches in diameter dated 1840, on the edge of which is engraved 'From Her Most Gracious Majesty to M. H. Perley, Chief Sachem of the Milicetes and Wunjeet Sagamore of the Micmac nation.'"

The wife of Newell Paul who ornamented the coat in which Moses Perley was presented to the Queen fifty-five years ago still makes ornamental baskets and such things in her humble little lodge on the Indian lot below the town.

It has been often assumed that the Indian has little sense of humor but this is not strictly correct. Da. Gesner has preserved a story which is a good specimen of the quiet humor of the red skin. The Indian, who was a Maliseet hunter and a great snuff-taker, tells his tale in this fashion. "One time I go huntum moose: night come dark, rain and snow come fast, no ax for makem wigwam; gun wet no get um fire; me crawl into big hollow tree; me very tired almost begin sleep. By and by me feelum hot wind on my face; me know hot bear's breath; he crawl into log too. I take um gun, she no go; I think me all same gone, all eat up. Ha! my old snuff box; I take some snuff and throw em in bear's face; he run out, not very much like um I guess. Every little while bear he go O-me Sneezum, over and over great many times. Morning come, me fix em gun, shoot um dead, he no more go sneeze um!"

The writer has a pleasant recollection of a visit paid last July in company with his father, Colonel Raymond, to the site of the old Meductic Fort. It was a lovely summer afternoon; the sun sinking towards the west flooded the old Indian cornfields with golden light; the blue waters of the river flowed quietly between the meadow lands on either side save where here and there some half hidden gravel bed caused the ripples to dance and play in the sunlight; wild roses grew along the bank; the sweet smell of the clover filled the air, the drowsy hum of bees was heard around. Back from the river beneath the refreshing shade of the steep hillside there prattled the little rivalet that flows from Gyles spring among the rocks above. Not far away a busy party of men were working at a neighbor's barn-raising. The occasion was marked by all the zest and spirit commonly called forth by such an event in the country. The ringing blows of the axe intermingled with shouting and laughter were in startling contrast to the elsewhere quiet scene. Soon however the busy workers were summoned to a bountiful repast prepared by the hands of their wives and daughters. Under the shade of the hillside the men bathed their heated faces in the streamlet and drank of its cool refreshing water; they talked of the common place news of the day with their casual visitors and tendered their hospitality with hearty good will. Seated at their hospitable board we talked of the historic associations of the place and gleaned from the older members of the party what each could tell of its local traditions.

All around us the homes of these honest neighbors seemed to speak of comfort and content. But what of those who once possessed their lands and claimed them as their birthright,—those whose mortal bodies sleep in the little square enclosure out yonder by the river side?

"Alas for them!—their day is o'er, Their fires are out on hill and shore,

No more for them the wild deer bounds The plough is on their hunting grounds," To us who lazily reclined beneath the shadow of the rocky hillside that lovely summer afternoon the little rivalet that descended from Gyles spring and babbled at our feet seemed to say with Tennyson's Brook:—
"I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever."

Yes, men may come and go, and these are gone. And still there seems to rise before us out of the recollections of the shadowy past, the figure of the old Indian Chief, and we seem to see him as with the air of a plumed knight he stands and answers for his tribe the question put to him by the English Commissioners "By what right or title do you hold these lands?" We seem to see him as he stands and pointing to that little enclosure by the river side gives as his answer "There are the graves of our grandsires; there are the graves of our fathers; there are the graves of our children."

Over the old Indian graveyard the tangled hawthorn has grown in a lawless profusion akin to the wild lawlessness of those whose bones are buried there. The hawthorne guards their resting place full well. And when in some fair May morning the fresh breeze shakes the hawthorn and the white blossoms fall like drifting snow upon the quiet graves beneath let the thought suggested be this:—Even so may the mantle of Christian charity cover the frailties of those who with all their faults have been more sinned against than sinning.

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1.04 P. M.—EXPRESS—Week days: For Presque Isle, and points North.

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