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Notes on the Tinnuk & Chepewyan  
Indians of British and Russian America.

Communicated

by

George Gibbs.





## NOTES ON THE TINNEH OR CHEPEWYAN INDIANS OF BRITISH AND RUSSIAN AMERICA.

1. The *Eastern Tinnch*, from a MS., by BERNARD R. ROSS, Esq., honorable Hudson's Bay Company.
2. The *Loucheux Indians*, by WILLIAM L. HARDISTY, Esq., honorable Hudson's Bay Company.
3. The *Kutchin tribes*, by STRACHAN JONES, Esq., honorable Hudson's Bay Company.

COMMUNICATED BY GEORGE GIBBS.

THE above tribes are embraced in the *Athabaskan* group in Mr. Gallatin's classification of the Indian tribes, (Trans. Am. Eth. Soc., vol. ii.) but that name, according to Mr. Ross, is a foreign word, applicable only to a particular locality. The name of *Chepewyan*, given to the eastern tribes by most of the early writers, is merely a compound Cree word relating to dress. Sir John Richardson (Boat Voyage through Rupert's Land) adopts, and upon a more correct and philosophical principle, the name *Tin-neh*, which Mr. Ross says, though given in the vocabularies for "man," means rather "the people." It seems to be the appellation which each tribe applies to itself, other branches being distinguished by a prefix relating to locality, or some peculiarity of dress or appearance. Thus, while the Chepewyans call themselves *Tin-neh*, they call the "Slaves" *Tess-cho-tin-neh*, or the people of the Great river, (Mackenzie's)

This family, the most northern in America excepting the Eskimo, is, at the same time, the most widely distributed, its range extending from the shores of Hudson's bay to the Pacific, where it is represented on Cook's inlet by the Kenai and other allied tribes. Several tribes, known collectively as the Tahkali, Tâcully, or Carriers, inhabit the upper waters of Fraser river, extending south to Fort Alexandria, in about latitude 52° 30'. Near the mouth of the Columbia two small bands, now nearly extinct, inhabited the wooded country on either side of the river, and others are located on the Umpqua, Rogne river, and the coast of southern Oregon, and on the Trinity or south fork of the Klamath, in northern California. Finally, the same race, as shown by affinity of language, appears in Arizona, New Mexico, and Chihuahua, under the names of Navajoes and Apaches. The papers mentioned at the head of this article, and which follow, all refer to the northern branches, but do not include those of the Pacific coast.

Mr. Ross divides the northern portion of this great family into—

- I. The eastern or Tinnch tribes proper.
- II. The mountain tribes.
- III. The western, consisting, so far as British America is concerned, of the Tahkalis
- IV. The northern, including all the Kutchin or Loucheux tribes.

It is to the first of these that the portion of his own notes here given refers. Mr. Hardisty's and Mr. Jones's relate to the last.

1.—THE EASTERN TINNEH.—*Ross.*

## PHYSICAL CHARACTER.

The eastern Tinnéh are of middle stature, squarely and strongly built. Although tall men are not uncommon in some of the tribes, the extremes in either direction are far from numerous. The lowest adult whom I have seen was four feet four inches in height, and the tallest, six feet six inches, the former a Slave, and the latter a Yellow Knife. As a whole they are tolerably fleshy, and their weight may be averaged at 140 pounds. The crania of these people are very large, with a tolerably good facial angle, the forehead rather high, and the skull elongated towards the occiput in most cases. The females appear to have the largest heads, and those of both sexes are covered with a matted profusion of black, coarse, and straight hair. They are, generally, long bodied, with short, stout limbs, but without any disproportion between the lengths of the upper and lower ones. The extremities are small and well-formed, the hands thick, with short, tapering fingers, offering a strong contrast to the narrow, long, and bony hands of the Crees, and resembling a good deal in this particular the Eskimo of the Arctic circle. The most distinguishing feature in the race is the breadth of their faces between the cheek bones; this, with a high and rather narrow forehead and elongated chin, gives them a pear-like appearance. They are possessed of considerable bodily strength, of which, as the Hudson's Bay Company employ them as boatmen, there are excellent opportunities of judging. They can carry 200 pounds, in a strap passed over the forehead, without difficulty, but they are, as a whole, considerably under the average of the European servants in endurance and strength.

There is no particular cast of features other than the large and high cheek bones. Large mouths are universal; the teeth are white and regular, even to old age; the chins are commonly pointed, but cleft ones are not unusual among the Yellow Knives; the usual description of noses are the snub and bottle, with a slight sprinkling of aquiline; the ears, generally large, are placed well up towards the crown of the head; sparse mustaches and beard are sometimes seen, but whiskers are unknown; the eyes are mostly of a very dark brown hazel, varied with lighter, but never clear tints of the same color, and with black; they are often placed obliquely in the head, and although there is no general rule in the case, I think this form is oftener met with among the northern than among the more southern tribes. The prevailing complexion may, with propriety, be said to be of a dirty yellowish ochre tinge, ranging from a smoky brown to a tint as fair as that of many half caste Europeans. The color of the skin is, in all cases, opaque, and its texture close and smooth. In a few instances I have seen the blood through the cheeks, giving a vermilion color to that part of the face. Cases of corpulency, though the rule in childhood, are very rare in old age. The women, if anything, are uglier than the men; of smaller stature, and in old age become positively hideous. The mammæ become pendulous and large, though they never, to my knowledge, attain the almost fabulous dimensions that I have heard are not uncommon among the Carrier women.

Nature certainly does more than art for the rearing of the children of these people. "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," and causes them to thrive under numerous disadvantages. Immediately after birth, without washing, the infant is laid naked on a layer of moss in a bag made of leather, and lined with hare skins. If it be summer, the latter are dispensed with. This bag is then securely laced, restraining the limbs in natural positions, and leaving the child freedom to move the head only. In this phase of its existence, it resembles strongly an Egyptian mummy. Cradles are never used; but this machine, called a "moss bag," is an excellent adjunct to the rearing of children up to a certain age, and has become almost, if not universally, adopted in the families of the

93  
 Hudson's Bay Company's employés The natives retain the use of the bag to a late period, say until the child passes a year, during which time it is never taken out except to change the moss. To this practice, continued to such an age, I attribute the turned in toes and rather crooked legs of many of these Indians. A child is not weaned until another takes its place, if the mother has milk to give it, and it is no unusual thing for an Indian woman of these tribes to suckle a child three or four years old, even with a baby at her other breast at the time. Respecting the food of infants, the routine is as follows: If the mother has milk they suck so long as she yields it; otherwise, mashed fish, chewed dried meat, or any other nutritious substance that can be had from a not very extended variety is given. A curious and superstitious custom obtains among the Slave, Hare, and Dogrib tribes, of not cutting the nails of female infants till they are four years of age. Their reason for this is, that if they did so earlier the child would, when arrived at womanhood, turn out lazy, and be unable to embroider well in porcupine quill-work, an art which these Indians are very skilful in, and are justly proud of. Another extraordinary practice is their giving no nutriment to infants for the first four days after birth, in order, as they say, to render them capable of enduring starvation in after life, an accomplishment which they are very likely to stand often in need of.

It is difficult to determine exactly the age of puberty. In boys it commences about twelve. Indeed, they endeavor, as soon as they can, to pay their addresses to the sex, and marry, generally, at from sixteen to twenty years of age. To fix the period for girls is still more difficult. They marry sometimes, but not often, at ten, and have their menses about thirteen. The women are capable of bearing children from fourteen to forty-five, a long portion of their lives, but in it very few infants are produced. Families on an average contain three children, including deaths, and ten is the greatest number I have seen. In that instance the natives found it so unusual that they called the father "Hon-nen-na-bé-ta," or the Father of Ten. Twins I have heard of but once. The proportion of births is rather in favor of females, a natural necessity, as it is the women among these tribes who have the shortest lease of life, and there is from various causes a much greater mortality among the girls than among the boys. The period of utero gestation is rather shorter than in Europeans, and seldom exceeds the nine months. Premature deliveries are very rare, and the women experience but little pain in child-birth, a few hours repose, after the occurrence, being sufficient to restore nature.

The duration of life is, on an average, short. Many children die at an early age, and there are few instances of the great longevity that occurs not unfrequently in more temperate climates. Rarely does one of the Tinneh reach the "three score years and ten" allotted to man, though an instance or two of passing this age has occurred within my own knowledge. A Slave woman died at Fort Simpson, in the autumn of 1861, who had already borne three children when Sir Alexander McKenzie, in 1789, descended the river bearing his name. Supposing that she had married at sixteen, and was confined once every three years, a high average for this people, she would have been ninety-seven years of age at the time of her death. For some years prior to her demise she was perfectly bed-ridden, and sadly neglected by her relatives, who evidently fancied that she had troubled them long enough. She lay solitary and forsaken in a miserable camp, composed of a rude shelter and bed of pine brush, her only covering a tattered caribou-skin robe. Such was the malignity of her disposition, even in "articulo mortis," that she reviled at nearly every adult, and struck with a stick at all the children and dogs that passed by her den.

The Tinneh are far from a healthy race. The causes of death proceed rather from weakness of constitution and hereditary taint than from epidemic diseases, though, when the latter do come, they make great havoc. Want of proper and regular nutriment and exposure in childhood in all probability und-rmine their



constitutions before they come of age. The most prevalent maladies are influenzas, coughs, bilious affections, dysentery, and indigestion, brought on by gluttony. Scrofulous cases are not uncommon, and all the tribes are more or less subject to a pseudo-syphilis of great virulence, and which is, so far as I can learn, indigenous. Ophthalmic affections are very common, chiefly among the Athabaskan and English River Chepewyans. They probably have their origin in syphilis. There are a few instances of total blindness, produced by the snow glare on the great lakes in spring. Lice literally overrun all the natives. Fleas are unknown. The former insects are eaten as a species of relish, and are cracked in the teeth and nibbled, in order the better to enjoy the flavor, which the Indians represent as sweet. The tapeworm (*tænia*) is rather common. Like all hunter tribes these people have the senses of sight and hearing in perfection, while, owing to the dirtiness of their habits, that of smell is greatly blunted.

#### RELIGIOUS OPINIONS.

It is a task of no ordinary difficulty to arrive at correct conclusions respecting the mental characteristics and religious ideas of the eastern Tinnéh. They are exceedingly averse to laying open their belief, such as it is, to strangers, and their real disposition is exhibited only in the camp, amidst the freedom of social intercourse. Deprived as I am of reference to the works of McKenzie and Hearne, I must, unaided by any gleams thrown on the subject from the past, describe things as they exist, under the light of the present.

These people seem to possess as cold and simple a theology as any known race of mankind. I am not, however, certain that such was the case seventy years ago. Many causes, all of which must have had more or less power, have combined to wean them from the faith of their ancestors. They are great imitators and respecters of more civilized races, and, so far as I can judge of their idiosyncrasy, would have been very likely to cast aside their old ideas and superstitions, if ridiculed by the whites, who, being fur traders and not missionaries, were far less likely to impart to them the Christian truths instead. They would thus have gradually and imperceptibly moved downwards to the condition of having no religion whatsoever.

It is now many years since the Roman Catholic priests first instructed the Beavers, Cariboo Eaters, Chepewyans, and Yellow Knives; and although it is only four years since the Slave communities came under the direct influence of the gospel, still, from intercourse with the others, their superstitions had, in a good measure, either faded away or been imbued with a considerable quantity of the ideas derived from the sacred writ. When the Christian religion spreads, as it certainly will in a very short time, among the eastern, northern, and mountain Tinnéh, their former faith will become a dream, and all traces of its existence be lost to the inquiring ethnologist. No heathen people, in my opinion, offer an easier field to the enterprise of missionaries. Their teaching will meet with but little opposition from the theological system or superstitions of the natives, and although I have great doubts if many will become sincere Christians at heart, they will at least submit willingly to the outward semblance of religion and conform to its ceremonies in a highly plausible manner. Their knowledge of a First Great Cause, the Maker and Ruler of the Universe, is very faint, yet I think it has always existed; but as they have no idea of a future state of rewards and punishments, this credence, if they possess it, exercises neither power nor control over their actions, and appears to be of about as much use in their mythological system as the Great Mogul was in modern times to the government of Hindoostan. Their religion is one of fear. They deprecate the wrath of demons, but no abstract notion of a single evil principle, antagonistic to and at war with the good one, appears to exist among them. The demons are, among the unsophisticated and unchristianized natives, many in number. They people

the woods and streams, haunt desert and lonely localities, and moan among the caches of the dead. To propitiate these spirits, offerings are made of some trifling and invariably very worthless article. This is hung upon a bush or tree, and among the tributes of this kind, which I have seen, may be mentioned strips of cotton, worn-out shoes, tattered robes, pieces of leather, and old belts, whose perfectly worthless character showed plainly that though these Indians have a sneaking, superstitious fear, it is not sufficiently strong to overcome the avarice that forms so predominant a trait in their character.

An inferior species of "totemism" obtains among them. Each hunter selects, as a species of familiar spirit, some animal, and invariably a carnivorous one. According to their custom, the man can then neither eat nor skin, and if avoidable, not even kill the object of his choice. The taking of the "totem" is not, so far as I am aware, the occasion of any religious ceremony, as is the case among some of the plain tribes. Pictures of various animals used in the olden day to be distributed among the natives by the traders, each individual receiving that of his totem. When a hunter had been unsuccessful he pulled this picture out of his medicine bag, laid it before him, and taking some tobacco from the same receptacle, paid adoration to the spirit by smoking and making it a speech. After this proceeding he returned with renewed ardor to the chase, and generally with success.

Fatalism appears to be deeply seated in their minds. They usually accept such luck as is sent them, if not without murmuring, at least apathetically, and make but few struggles to combat adverse circumstances.

There does not appear to be any regular order of priesthood. Any one who feels inclined to do so turns medicine man, but some are much more highly esteemed than others, as possessing greater skill in conjuring away sickness and foretelling future events. The articles by which they affect to perform many remarkable and mysterious operations are very commonplace and trifling; a flint, a piece of mica, a colored stone, or a bullet, being all equally efficacious mediums, through which to hold communication with their tutelary spirits. I have on several occasions, for amusement, tested the soothsaying powers of some of the most celebrated wizards, by requesting information as to the future arrival of boats or letters, and I can confidently state that if they guess correctly once in twenty times, it is as much as their supernatural powers are capable of effecting. As jugglers they hold a very inferior status, and do not approach, even in a remote degree, the really remarkable skill that many of the Algonquin tribes possess in this way. An idea of the powers of conjurers to kill Indians at a distance, simply by the force of their spells, was formerly common to all the race, and still exists with unabated strength among the Kutchin tribes of the Youcon river, who put great faith yet in their medicine men, and pay them liberally for their services in seasons of danger or sickness. Additional facts regarding these "doctors" will be noted hereafter, when I proceed to explain the medical theories and practice of the nation.

#### MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL CHARACTERISTICS.

Few of the moral faculties are possessed in any remarkable degree by the eastern Tinnch. They are tolerably honest, not bloodthirsty nor cruel; but this is, I suppose, the extent, as they are confirmed liars, far from being chaste, and have but very indistinct perceptions of doing to others as they would be done by. Some tribes are more noted for honesty than others; the Beavers and Chepewyans being at the top of the scale, the Slaves in the middle, and the Hares, Dogribs, and Yellow Knives at the bottom. The two first-named branches will compete in this respect with any European nation. No people in the world are more tenacious of what they possess themselves, or more willing to restore the property of others. On giving up what they may find to the owner, a demand for payment will sometimes be made. If the request be granted, well and good.

If not, it will make no difference afterwards as to the rectitude of their conduct on a similar occasion. In the payment of their debts, also, they evince a much greater sense of justice than the other tribes. They seldom or never dispute their accounts if they be correct, and endeavor to liquidate them to the utmost of their power. The Slaves are tolerably honest, but have great objections to clear off old debts, giving for a reason that the articles purchased are already worn out. The remaining tribes cannot be said to have a very keen perception of the rights of property, and are apt to reverse Prudhomme's celebrated dogma, "*la propriété c'est le vol,*" into "*le vol c'est la propriété.*" Among all the branches of the eastern division, there is no law to punish theft further than restoration; or if that cannot be had, purloining in return an article of similar or greater value. They do not, however, in general, steal much among themselves. The taking of provisions from "caches" in times of scarcity is reckoned perfectly lawful, but only the direst extremity will cause them to plunder those of the Hudson's Bay Company.

In the fabrication of false reports, and in the utterance of lies to serve their own interests, they are great adepts. The former is generally done from a wish to "cram," and is often rather ludicrous, but in the latter they evince a complete disregard for truth, and never appear in the least degree ashamed when taxed with it. There appears, indeed, to be a strong natural proneness to exaggeration in the minds of the eastern Tinnéh, and a warped bias towards falsehood, even when a correct statement would equally serve their purpose. The smallest accident becomes in their narration magnified into truly horrific proportions, and on hearing of some terrible case of starvation or disaster from them, it is necessary to take it "*grano salis,*" as I have on several occasions seen the murdered restored to life, and the starved to death jolly and fat.

As a whole, the race under consideration is unwarlike. The Chepewyans, Beavers, and Yellow Knives are much braver than the remaining tribes. I have never known, in my long residence among this people, of arms having been resorted to in conflict. In most cases their mode of personal combat is a species of wrestling, and consists in the opponents grasping each other's long hair. This is usually a very harmless way of settling disputes, as whoever is thrown loses; yet instances have occurred of necks having been dislocated in the tussle. Knives are almost invariably laid aside previous to the contest. Some of the Chepewyans box tolerably well, but this method of fighting does not seem to be generally approved of, nor is it much practiced. On examination of the subject closely, I am disposed to consider that this peaceful disposition proceeds more from timidity than from any actual disinclination to shed blood. These Indians, whether in want or not, will take the life of any animal, however useless to them, if they be able to do so, and that they can on occasion be sufficiently treacherous and cruel is evinced by the massacre at St. John's, on Peace river, and at Fort Nelson, on the Liard river. It may not be out of place here to give a brief account of the latter catastrophe:

In 1811 the post of Fort Nelson, on the Liard river, was in charge of a Mr. Henry, a well educated and clever man, but of a hasty temper and morose disposition. While equipping the Indians in the autumn, he had a violent dispute with one of the principal chiefs of the Bastard Beaver Indians resorting to the establishment, who departed greatly enraged and muttering suppressed threats, which were little thought of at the time. In the winter a "courier" arrived at the fort to inform the whites that there were the carcasses of several moose deer lying at the camp ready to be hauled, and requested dog sleds to be sent for that purpose. Mr. Henry, never in the least suspecting any treachery, immediately despatched all the men and dogs that he could muster. On their way out they met an Indian, who told them that they had better turn back, as the wolverines had eaten all the meat. This information, as it turned out, was given from a friendly motive; but fear of ulterior consequences to himself pre-



vented the man from speaking more plainly. The fort interpreter, who was of the party and who all along suspected something more than appeared upon the surface, took the precaution to carry his gun with him, and when they drew near to the path which led from the bed of the river to the top of the bank where the Indians were encamped he lingered a little behind. On the others mounting the ascent they were simultaneously shot down, at one discharge, by the natives who were in ambush awaiting them. When the interpreter heard the shots he was convinced of foul play; he therefore turned, and made for the fort as quickly as he could, pursued by the whole party of savages, whose aim was to prevent him from alarming the establishment. The man was a famous runner, and despite the disadvantage of small tripping snow-shoes, which permitted him to sink more deeply than the Indians, who, on their large hunting snow-shoes, almost skimmed over the surface of the snow, he would have reached the houses before them had not the line that confined the snow-shoe on his foot broken. His enemies were too closely upon him to allow time for its repair, so, wishing to sell his life as dearly as possible, he levelled his gun at the nearest Indian, who evaded the shot by falling upon his face, whereupon the whole party made up and despatched him. After perpetrating this additional murder the band proceeded to the fort, which they reached at early dawn. A poor old Canadian was, without suspicion of evil, cutting fire-wood at the back gate. His brains were dashed out with their axes, and they entered the establishment, whose inhabitants, consisting, with one exception, of women and children, were buried in profound repose. They first opened Mr Henry's room where he was asleep. The chief pushed him with the end of his gun to awaken him. He did so, and seeing numerous fiendish and stern faces around him, made a spring to reach a pair of pistols that were hanging over his head; but before he could grasp them, he fell a bleeding corpse on the bosom of his wife, who, in turn, became a helpless victim of the sanguinary and lustful revenge of the infuriated savages. Maddened by the blood, and demons in heart and act, they next proceeded to wreak their vengeance on the innocent women and children, who expired in agonies and under treatment too horrible to relate. The pillage of the stores was the next step, after which they departed, leaving the bodies of the dead unburied. No measures further than the abandonment of the fort for several years were taken by the Northwest Company, to whom the establishment belonged, to punish the perpetrators of the atrocious deed, yet it is a curious fact that when I visited Fort Liards in 1849, but one of the actors survived, all the others having met with violent deaths, either by accident or at the hands of other Indians. This man, who was at the time only a lad, confessed to have dashed the brains out of an infant, taking it by the heels and swinging it against the walls of the house.

The fear of enemies, when in these peaceful times there are none to dread, is a remarkable trait of the timidity which so strongly influences the minds of the eastern Tinneh. It is, I conjecture, a traditional recollection of the days when the Knisteneaux or Crees made annual forays into the country of the Tinneh, pushing so far as Bear river in search of scalps and plunder, when the Yellow Knives bullied the Slaves and Dogribs, and the Beavers warred with the Sikanies. A strange footprint, or any unusual sound in the forest, is quite sufficient to cause great excitement in the camp. At Fort Resolution I have on several occasions caused all the natives encamped around to flock for protection into the fort during the night by simply whistling, hidden in the bushes. My train of hauling dogs also, of a large breed and great hunters, would, in crashing through the branches in pursuit of an unfortunate hare, frighten some women out gathering berries, who would rush in frantic haste to the tents and fearfully relate a horrific account of some strange painted Indians whom *they had seen*. It was my custom in the spring, during the wild fowl season, to sleep outside at some distance from the fort. Numerous were the cautions that I received from



the natives of my foolhardiness in doing so, and when they found that I escaped with impunity, they accounted for the circumstance to their own satisfaction by saying that I had bribed the "bad Indians to leave me alone."

The race under consideration must be regarded as far from chaste, as continence in a unmarried female is scarcely considered a virtue, and its want brings no discredit on the individual. The intercourse between the sexes begins very soon. This is easily accounted for by their hearing and seeing so much that they should not at a very early age, which ripens their instincts at an earlier period than either their temperament or the climate of the country would warrant. Their dispositions are not amatory, and, in the case of the females, the love of gain is a much stronger incitement to immorality than any natural warmth of constitution. The divine and customary barriers between blood relations are not well observed, for, although it is not considered correct by general opinion, instances of men united to their mothers, their sisters, or their daughters, though not common, are far from rare. I have heard among them of two sons keeping their mother as a common wife, of another wedded to his daughter, and of several married to their sisters, while in cases of polygamy having two sisters to wife is very usual. The married state, easily entered upon and involving few duties and responsibilities, is but a slender guarantee for the mutual faithfulness of the sexes. A Tinnéh woman, however obedient she may be to her taskmaster as regards labor, considers herself quite at liberty to dispose of her personal favors as she may wish, which latitude is not at all agreed to by her husband, who, while claiming and exercising quite as much freedom for himself, severely punishes his wife if she forgets in a single instance the allegiance due, in his opinion, to him alone. The custom of robbing one another of their wives, or of fighting for them, the facilities for divorce, and the inferior estimation in which women are held, combine to produce a very lax condition of the marriage ties, and to originate a low state of morality, which will doubtless improve gradually as the operating causes are neutralized or done away with by the exertions of missionaries and advance of Christianity.

The instinct of love of offspring, common to the lower animals, exists strongly among these people, but considerably modified by the selfishness which is so conspicuous a feature in their character. In sickness they appear to sympathize strongly and to take great interest in the sufferer, so far as lamenting and crying goes; but their affection is seldom strong enough to induce them to do anything that would either tax their comforts much or require great exertion. On arriving at mature age the bond between relatives is easily broken, and even in adolescence often but scanty deference is paid to parents. The parental instinct, though far more strongly developed in the mother than in the father, would, I am confident, never call forth such traits of self-sacrifice, even to death, as have been exhibited many times among civilized and even barbarous nations. Male children are invariably more cherished and cared for than females. The latter are mere drudges, and obliged on all occasions to concede to their brothers; and though female infanticide, formerly so prevalent, is now unknown, still in seasons of starvation or times of danger, girls invariably fall the first sacrifices to the exigencies of the case. The death of a child is apparently not much regretted, the mourning is short, and although in after years a mother will lament her offspring bitterly, there is far more of custom than reality in the exhibition, and it rarely proceeds from the heart. The relation on the part of the children is still more soulless. Only in early age do they pay much attention to the commands of their parents, and the control of the latter is soon loosened. A curious circumstance is, that children are treated exactly as grown-up people, and talked to as such; but as the character of all ages is decidedly childish, it is not to be wondered at if such a manner suits all parties equally well.

As these people are obliged to lead a very wandering life, in order to procure food either by fishing or hunting, there can be, and in fact is, but little or no

attachment to particular localities existing in their minds, though they have a strong bias towards their mode of life. The latter sentiment does not retain nearly so strong a hold on their dispositions as it does on most savage nations. Wedded to ancient manners and customs by much more slender ties than exist in the generality of Indian tribes, they easily fall into the habits of Europeans, and, in cases of servants engaged from among them by the Hudson's Bay Company, willingly abandon the charms of freedom and the chase for the more regular comforts and daily avocations of civilized life. I judge from this that if these tribes were properly instructed and located in a more favorable climate, they would become tolerable husbandmen, and without acquiring the ferocity of their congeners, the Navajoes, soon surpass them in agricultural skill and herdsman'ship.

## 2.—THE LOUCHEUX INDIANS.—*Hardisty.*

The physical characteristics of the Loucheux nation are, with few exceptions, the same as those of the other aborigines of North America. The skin is commonly of a sallow brown tint, in some cases what might be called a yellowish white; the hair is long, black, and lank; the beard scanty, with rare exceptions. They have black deep-set eyes, receding foreheads, high cheek bones, high, aquiline noses and large mouths with tumid lips. The eyes are of a dark hazel color, often approaching to black, frequently small and oblique, though I have noticed particular individuals with very large eyes, while in others the eyes were remarkably small and these invariably oblique.

The Loucheux language is a dialect of the Chepewyan, which it more closely resembles than the intervening dialects of the Hare Indians and Slaves, although a very slight intercourse enables the latter also to understand the former sufficiently for the ordinary purposes of traffic. The Loucheux proper is spoken by the Indians of Peel's river, thence traversing the mountains westward down Rat river, the Tuk-kuth, (Rat Indians,) and Van-tah-koo-chin, it extends to the Tran-jik-koo-chin, Na-tsik-koo-chin, and Koo-cha-koo-chin of the Youcon. All the tribes inhabiting the valley of the Youcon understand one another; a slight difference of accent being all that is perceptible in their respective dialects. The first material change occurs among the "Gens de Fou" or Hun-koo-chin, (river people.) These make use of a great many words in common with the "Gens de Bois," who again understand the language of the "Mauvais Monde" of Francis lake, which is the common language of the Mauvais Monde of Fort Halkett, the Thikanies, the Ah-bah-to-din-ne (mountain Indians) and Nahau-nies of Forts Liard and Simpson.

The Loucheux, though sunk in barbarism, are rather more intelligent than the other tribes composing the great Chepewyan nation, owing no doubt to their intellectual faculties being more frequently brought into active play in their traffic and intercourse with other tribes. They are essentially a commercial people, and live by barter, supplying their wants by exchanging their beads, which form the circulating medium, for the peltries of the neighboring tribes, to whom they go on periodical trading visits. They hunt no furs, but are, nevertheless, good hunters, and invariably well supplied with provisions, unless when some very unfavorable circumstances may have occurred to prevent success in the chase. They are great talkers and very fond of displaying their eloquence. They are always making public harangues, and in the figurative language they use, their speeches are not ineloquent nor void of sense. Their delivery is good, but the effect is spoiled by their gradually raising their voices to such a high pitch as to be compelled to stop before they come to the end of their speech from sheer want of breath. After a minute or two they begin again in a lower key, and gradually raising their voices as they proceed and get excited; they finally close their harangues with a most infernal screech, which is particularly disagreeable to a white man's ears.

The Loucheux generally live in large parties, each band headed by a chief and one or more medicine men. The latter, however, do not possess any secular power as chiefs, but they acquire an authority by shamanism to which even the chiefs themselves are subject.

All the chiefs, medicine men, and those who possess rank acquired by property have two, three, or more wives, so that only few of the young men have wives, unless they can content themselves with some old cast-off widow, who, from ill health and the effects of bad treatment, is no longer able to perform heavy work. The consequence is that those who have wives are invariably jealous, and treat their women most brutally. It is one of the principal causes of the great falling off of the Loucheux nation. They are not half the number they used to be. The other causes of the decrease in the population are female infanticide, and premature birth and very frequent miscarriages from over exertion, &c. Infanticide is caused by the misery of the women—at least, this is the only reason they give for it. When questioned on the subject, they invariably give the same answer, “that they love their children, and destroy them only to save them from the hardships and misery to which their mothers are exposed in this life.” To preserve them alive is equivalent to the unnatural crime of a mother wilfully placing her daughter in misery. When a young man has acquired the means, he purchases a young girl (perhaps an infant) from its mother, who has the power to dispose of her daughter to whom she pleases, though no doubt she will sometimes consult the wishes of her husband. The fathers and brothers have no voice in the matter by the laws of the tribe. The females are fewer than the men, especially when young, and might be considered pretty, but they get proportionably coarse and ugly as they grow old, owing to hard labor and bad treatment. The very low position which they occupy in the social scale, is a sign of the depth to which the Loucheux are still sunk in barbarism. The women are literally beasts of burden to their lords and masters. All the heavy work is performed by them. When an animal is killed, they carry the meat and skin on their backs to the camp, after which they have the additional labor of dressing the skin, cutting up the meat and drying it. They are the drawers of wood and water; all the household duties devolve upon them; they have to keep up the fires, cook, &c., besides all the other work supposed to belong to the women, such as lacing the snow shoes for the family, making and mending their husband's and children's clothes, &c. In raising the camp, or travelling from one place to another, if, in winter, the woman hauls all the baggage, provisions, lodge poles, cooking utensils, with probably a couple of children on the top of all, besides an infant on the back, while the husband walks quietly on ahead with his gun, horn and shot-pouch, and empty hunting bag. In the summer the man uses a small light hunting canoe, requiring very little exertion to propel it through the water, while the poor woman is forced to struggle against the current in a large ill-made canoe, laden with all the baggage, straining every nerve to reach a particular place pointed out beforehand by her master as the intended camping ground.

They are a lively, pleasant race, and have many rules and regulations, which are strictly adhered to both in public and private life. Their games and pastimes are more manly and rational than those of the dull, apathetic Slaves. They are passionately fond of dancing, wrestling, running, &c., in all which sports the women, especially the younger, take a part. Their dances, which are accompanied by singing, are not void of harmony, as they keep time with their bodies, beating cadence with their feet, and moving themselves in grotesque though not unpleasant postures, which are apparently rather difficult to perform, as they perspire profusely. Their wrestling matches are commenced generally by two little boys. When one of them is thrown he retires and another, a little bigger, takes his place. As soon as he has thrown his opponent he rises up quickly and places himself in preparation for the next, who will make a sudden



rush at him so as to get an advantageous hold before he is prepared and while still panting from his previous exertion. Still if he be the stronger or more expert, he may knock down his second adversary, also the third or perhaps a fourth before he is thrown, when he retires and leaves the field to his conqueror, who in his turn will continue to throw as many as he can, one after the other, until he, too, perhaps from exhaustion, is obliged to give way to a fresher or more vigorous opponent. The combatants rise in gradation until all the men have had their turn, and one, the last, remains alone on the ground with the honor of being the best wrestler of the tribe. Afterwards two little girls begin in their turn and so on until all the women also have been thrown, except one who remains to claim the approbation of her male friends. In winter time they have a most amusing, though rather unsafe, game to those who are unacquainted with it. Four trees are selected, forming as nearly as possible a square of about thirty feet, to which strong leather cords are tied diagonally as tight as possible, about twenty feet from the ground. Where the cords cross a piece of leather about eight inches square is tied securely, on which each in his turn is required to stand. The least pressure sends the person up in the air perhaps a couple of feet, when he comes down the second time on the piece of leather. The cords being suddenly distended with his weight, the "contre coup" will shoot him up perpendicularly in the air, perhaps a dozen feet. Now is the time of danger, for if he is not expert, or has not been able to keep himself straight, he may come down a height of perhaps twenty or thirty feet on his head to the ground. The object is to see who will fall oftenest perpendicularly on his feet on the little leather table without breaking his neck, I might say, or tumbling on one side to the ground to the amusement and uproarious laughter of the others.

They are hospitable, but more, I think, because it was a custom of their fathers than from real generosity. After the first day, during which a guest is served with the best they have, and welcome, he may remain for months with them without rising above the salt, as it were, unless indeed he be a chief, or a man of consequence—that is, one with plenty of beads, or more especially a medicine man, but even then only for a time. Avarice is certain to get the better of their fears in the end. Each head of a family is expected to, and does, act the host for the whole band in his turn, day about. Whether they do so in rotation or how it is managed I was never able to find out. Whether invitations are sent, or the fact of any particular person putting all the kettles in camp in request appizes the others which is to be the general eating-room of the day, I cannot say. At all events, all the males, from the oldest to the youngest, are drawn as if by magic to the point of general attraction. They continue falling in until the lodge is crammed; the more the merrier; the greater the pressure, the better the host is pleased. The favored or principal guest sits on the host's right hand, the next on his left, and so on downwards to the fourth or fifth on each side of him. The sixth downward are considered to be below the salt. The next rule observed is to divide or carve the meat properly according to rule. The best and fattest pieces, the titbits, are piled in a heap before the principal guest, who, after he has satisfied his hunger, sends the rest to his own lodge for his wife and children. The person on his left hand gets the next best pieces and sends what he leaves to his family, and so on downwards to the salt, below which the meat is distributed as it comes, without selection. Every fowl, every animal and part of an animal, must be divided or carved in a particular way, and if any person evince ignorance or inexpertness it excites the laughter and ridicule of the rest. One may be a principal guest with one host, and yet sit fourth or fifth or even below the salt with another. All goes by relationship or the estimation in which the person is held by the particular host for the time being. The host himself does not eat on that day beyond taking one mouthful, tasting the meat before helping the head guest. Should he eat

anything more, he would be considered very mean and ridiculed accordingly. He may get his wife to cook something for him after the guests have left, but not before, and it may be some time before they do leave, especially if there be anything to talk about, for after they have all eaten and drank, the host is obliged by rule to cut up tobacco and fill every pipe. The wife cuts the wood and cooks and collects all the pans. During the repast she sits at the door, if she can find room, and outside if not, to hand to her husband whatever he may ask for.

This apparent abnegation of self is perceptible through all their regulations. For instance, unless he is alone a hunter cannot take and appropriate the meat of the animal he kills. Should he do so he would be considered mean. And this feeling is so strong that I could not induce them to abolish the custom during the long time I remained among them, so much do they dread the idea of being thought mean with regard to anything eatable. When two *good* hunters go together, good and well—the one has as good a chance of getting meat as the other; but when one is a bad hunter and the other a good one the former gets all the meat and the real hunter has nothing, and loses his ammunition into the bargain.

Although hospitable to a certain extent as far as food is concerned, their natural character is selfish. (But where will you find an Indian who is not?) They would not part with half a dozen common beads for nought, and are keenly alive to the ridicule attached to a bad bargainer. They will harangue and protest for days against what they consider (all honor and honesty apart, of course) an inadequate payment for what they give. They will have recourse to every subterfuge, even intimidation, to have the best of a bargain, and will do all in their power to fleece their opponent, and boast about it afterwards.

The wife is expected to furnish the skins required for the clothing of the whole family, either by dressing the skins of the animals killed by her husband, or by purchase from others with *her own beads*—that is, her marriage portion, or what she may have had on her person or dress when she was married, and what she may have received from time to time from her husband for good conduct, or, probably, when he happened to be in an unusually good and generous humor. She supplies all the beads or wampum required for ornamenting the dresses of all the family, including her own and even her husband's. *His* beads are the family fortune, the capital which cannot be touched except for purposes of traffic or for payment of *doctor's bills*, &c.—that is, paying the medicine-man in time of sickness and for producing wind and favorable weather in times of scarcity. The first time a Loucheux saw a blacksmith's bellows he, of course, reported to his friends all particulars regarding the ironmaker's blowing machine. Some time after a medicine-man came to me secretly to inquire the truth, whether it would be possible for him to purchase, and the price of this wonderful wind-producing machine of the ironmaker's, and whether it could be turned to account in making wind for hunting moose in cold weather, for, being a medicine-man, he was expected to make wind when it was required, and if he could only get this wonderful wind-maker, which he had heard so much about, his reputation would be at its height, and his fortune made.

The Loucheux have a number of legendary stories, but generally of such an obscene character as not to merit mention here. Even the story regarding caste, or the regulation which divides mankind (the people, Loucheux) into three different grades, is of a filthy character. They believe the heavens to be a walled canopy encircling the world. There are people above this canopy who in former times used to visit the earth, and on several occasions carried off women with them to the celestial regions. The women, however, it seems, did not find this paradise such a place of bliss as to wish to remain there. They regretted the pleasures of this lower world of ours, and after a time hit upon the expedient of boring the heavenly canopy. Then secretly collecting all the cords

they could find, they tied the end to a stone somewhat larger than the orifice, and by this means lowered themselves to the earth. The story goes on to say that the cord was just long enough, but, unfortunately, they found themselves over a lake, and might have been drowned after all had it not happened that an Indian was passing in a canoe at the time, and saved them from their perilous situation.

With reference to the story about caste it is difficult to arrive at a correct solution of the matter. The fact, I believe, is that they do not know themselves, for they give various accounts of the origin of the three great divisions of mankind. Some say it was so from the beginning; others that it originated when all fowls, animals, and fish were people—the fish were the *Chitsah*, the birds *Tain-gees-ah-tsah*, and the animals *Nat-singh*; some that it refers to the country occupied by the three great nations who are supposed to have composed the whole family of man; while the other, and, I think, most correct opinion, is that it refers to color, for the words are applicable. *Chitsah* refers to anything of a pale color—fair people; *Nat-singh*, from *ah-zingh*, black, dark—that is, dark people; *Tain-gees-ah-tsah*, neither fair nor dark, between the two, from *tain-gees*, the half, middle, and *ah-tsah*, brightish, from *tsa*, the sun, bright, glittering, shining, &c. Another thing, the country of the *Na-tsik-koo-chin* is called *Nah-t'singh* to this day, and it is the identical country which the *Nat-singh* occupied. The *Na-tsik-koo-chin* inhabit the high ridge of land between the *Youcon* and the Arctic sea. They live entirely on the flesh of the reindeer, and are very dark-skinned compared with the *Chit-sangh*, who live a good deal on fish. All the elderly men fish the salmon and salmon trout during the summer, while the young men hunt the moose, and have regular white-fish fisheries every autumn besides. Some of the *Chit-sangh* are very fair, indeed, in some instances approaching to white. The *Tain-gees-ah-tsa* live on salmon trout and moose meat, and, taken as a whole, are neither so fair as the *Chit-sangh* nor so dark as the *Nah-t'singh*. They are half-and-half between the two. A *Chit-sangh* cannot, by their rules, marry a *Chit-sangh*, although the rule is set at naught occasionally; but when it does take place the persons are ridiculed and laughed at. The man is said to have married his sister, even though she may be from another tribe and there be not the slightest connection by blood between them. The same way with the other two divisions. The children are of the same color as their mother. They receive caste from their mother; if a male *Chit-sangh* marry a *Nah-t'singh* woman the children are *Nah-t'singh*, and if a male *Nah-t'singh* marry a *Chit-sangh* woman the children are *Chit-sangh*, so that the divisions are always changing. As the fathers die out the country inhabited by the *Chit-sangh* becomes occupied by the *Nah-t'singh*, and so on vice versa. They are continually changing countries, as it were. Latterly, however, these rules are not so strictly observed or enforced as formerly, so that there is getting to be a complete amalgamation of the three great divisions, such a mixture that the difference of color is scarcely perceptible, and, no doubt, will soon disappear altogether, except what is produced by natural causes. The people who live on the flesh of the reindeer are always darker than those who live on fish, or on part fish and part flesh. One good thing proceeded from the above arrangement—it prevented war between two tribes who were naturally hostile. The ties or obligations of color or caste were stronger than those of blood or nationality. In war it was not tribe against tribe, but division against division, and as the children were never of the same caste as the father, the children would, of course, be against the father and the father against the children, part of one tribe against part of another, and part against itself, so that, as may be supposed, there would have been a pretty general confusion. This, however, was not likely to occur very often, as the worst of parents would have naturally preferred peace to war with his own children.

As a rule slavery does not exist among the *Loucheux*, but the orphan and the



friendless are kept in servitude and treated so harshly as to be really little better than slaves, until such time as they get big enough and bold enough to assert their independence, when they are allowed to shift for themselves.

The Loucheux are very superstitious, and place implicit faith in the pretended incantations of their medicine-men, for whom they entertain great fear. When a death occurs they make loud expressions of grief. They accompany their lamentations with a song or dirge, in which they enumerate all the good qualities of the deceased, and when they have raised themselves to a fit of ungovernable fury and excitement, a medicine-man will adroitly and imperceptibly raise the idea that the person's death was caused by a medicine-man of a neighboring tribe, or if a disinterested person do so for him, so much the better, as it draws away suspicion from himself. On such occasions the relatives of the deceased will immediately take a quantity of beads to the conjuror, and entreat him to find out who the hidden enemy really is, and the particular reason of the death of their friend, so that they in their turn may know in what direction to turn the shaft of revenge. When a person of consequence is sick, he will frequently receive a visit of condolence from a medicine-man of a neighboring tribe. As a mark of respect for the stranger he is invariably employed to recover the sick person, being of course well paid in beads for his trouble, to the exclusion and great displeasure of the native "doctor," who is sure to find some means to be revenged on the intruder for the slight he has received, and the loss he has sustained. On such occasions there is frequently a row, after, if not before, the departure of the visitor, for his opponent will secretly endeavor to make the impression that some medicine-man, or perhaps the favored guest himself is the real enemy of the sick person. When these insinuations and stories begin to take effect, the guest seizes the first favorable opportunity to take his departure, for he has a sufficient knowledge of the Loucheux human nature to be aware that in moments of great grief or excitement the slightest whim or chance may direct the popular fury towards himself. If he gets off safe, he goes on his way rejoicing under a good load of beads and thinking good humoredly on the acquisition he has made to his wealth, and the power and influence it will give him among his own tribe, riches being the talisman with the Loucheux as well as others. The power of the medicine-men is very great, and they use every means they can to increase it by working on the fears and credulity of the people. Their influence exceeds even that of the chiefs. The power of the latter consists in the quantity of beads they possess—their wealth and the means it affords them to work ill to those to whom they may be evil-disposed; while the power of the medicine-man consists in the harm they believe he is able to do by shamanism, should they happen to displease him in any way. It is when sickness prevails that the conjuror rules supreme; it is then that he fills his bead bags and increases his riches. Some near relative of the invalid, or, as often happens, some other person, to court popularity, will give him a quantity of beads to save the sick person or to ascertain his probable death or recovery. Of course the medicine-man, from the symptoms of the malady or from appearances, has already decided on the answer he is to give in the event of his being employed in the matter, and from long practice and observation he generally becomes an adept in predicting the final death or recovery; for even if the worst be foretold, he is perfectly aware that the friends of the sick person, so far from sparing their beads and losing all hope, will, on the contrary, rather give even more to avert the doom.

But the medicine-man has other ways of increasing his means. When practice becomes low, and the people seem to forget that their prosperity, their health, and even their lives are in his hands, among other tricks he will probably take a pretended nap during the day, and when he awakens will inform those near him that such and such a person will, in his opinion, soon die. This he does in an ambiguous way, without particularly mentioning the person's name,



but in such a manner that it is perfectly well understood by all who is referred to. As soon as it is dark, for they never conjure in the daytime unless in cases of great emergency, the doomed person goes to the doctor with his beads, makes a short speech, in which he extols the power and ability of the doctor, laments the fate which threatens himself, and finally presents him with his beads and entreats him to retard, or, if possible, prevent the doom which awaits him. The doctor replies that he is sorry to give him pain and would not wish to take his beads for nothing, that it is probably a mistake, and may even refer to some other person. In his wanderings among his medicinal spirits, or familiars, he merely observed a shade which overhung a particular individual, still it may not indicate anything serious, but he will ascertain correctly during the night and let him know. In the mean time he retains the beads with a secret determination that they shall not leave his possession in future. I have known several fall sick and actually die from the effects of such stories on the imagination, while in other cases it was with the greatest difficulty I could remove the impression produced on their minds by these threatened calamities. The prediction invariably told most fearfully on the imagination, producing first low spirits, languor, then sickness, particularly in bilious subjects, and very frequently even death. When such things occur, the character and power of the cunning rogue has reached its height, and he is ever after looked upon with fear and respect, and consulted with confidence. No hunting excursion, no voyage, nothing, in fact, is undertaken without consulting him. Often have I known a party of Indians on the eve of starting to pass the winter or summer at some place favorable for hunting, when a medicine-man would suddenly set all their plans at naught by circulating the idea that starvation, sickness, death, or other misfortune awaited them in that particular direction, while he would cunningly recommend them some other place, which, from knowledge of the country, proximity to his own lands, or in some way or other was more suitable to his own views.

When any of their relations die all their beads which have not been given to the medicine-man, or otherwise destroyed or disposed of to show their grief, and the estimation in which the deceased was held, are either buried with the body or broken up, and the fragments sprinkled about the grave, or, what of late has been customary, they are kept to be finally distributed among the Indians at the dance for the dead, which takes place nine or twelve months after interment, when their mourning and all outward tokens of grief are supposed to end. All the beads they have on their persons are also distributed in this way, or destroyed, together with their clothes. Their hair is cut close to the head or singed, which certainly gives them the appearance of miserable, grief-stricken wretches. Sometimes too they will cut and lacerate their bodies with flints, or, as sometimes happens, they will, in a fit of revenge against fate, stab some poor, friendless person who may happen to be sojourning among them. Those who bury the dead receive a quantity of beads in payment, but fear of the lifeless body makes them averse to the office, and they generally endeavor to evade being selected to perform the service, owing to the restrictions imposed by their rules on all those who are selected to perform that duty. For instance, they must not eat fresh meat, unless the absence of every other kind of food renders it absolutely necessary to preserve life, and that only when it is cold. They must tear the meat with their teeth, the use of a knife being prohibited. They must drink out of a gourd, carried for the purpose, as they are not allowed to slake their thirst out of any drinking or cooking vessel. Those, too, who have handled a dead body wear peeled willow wands round the arms and neck, or carry peeled willow wands, about two feet long, in their hands. These are supposed to keep off infection, and to prevent any evil effect which might follow the handling of a deceased body. After a certain time subsequent to the death of a relative, the nearest of kin to the deceased, if a man of wealth, makes a general festival for the dead—the “dead dance”—when he distributes the rest of his beads—his

whole fortune—to his countrymen, half of what each receives to be returned either in beads or furs after a year, to enable the person who makes the festival to begin the world afresh after he has completed his term of mourning. In the mean time he makes every exertion to collect a quantity of good meat. Invitations are sent to all the neighboring tribes; a level piece of ground is fenced round, and the beads are strung and neatly hung up on painted cross poles within the enclosure. During this time, also, he composes the songs to be used on the occasion, in which all the good qualities of the deceased are enumerated, his abilities as a hunter are extolled, and any good or praiseworthy act he may have committed during life is held up as an example for the imitation of others. When the guests have assembled, early on the following morning, every one cleans and paints himself; fires are lighted within the enclosure; several are set to cook, others to cut up tobacco, while the rest are dancing to the songs of the host and his wives, who, all the time, beats cadence on a piece of painted wood he holds in his hand. After they have had their repast and smoked their pipes the singing and dancing recommence, in which they all join. They then throw a bladder of grease among the crowd. The first who seizes hold of it runs away as fast as he can, pursued by all the rest. When he finds himself hard pushed he endeavors to secure at least a piece for himself, but this is not easy to do, as the grease is mixed up with sinew, which makes it very difficult to break, so he must either endeavor to outrun his pursuers or be content to part with it to the hungry multitude behind. By this time he is getting exhausted, and he tries to double on the others; but, among such a number, it is hardly possible to escape, and he will either stop or throw the grease on one side, when there is a general scrambling for it, accompanied by screams and a noise that is deafening. After going on in this way for a time they will quietly eat the grease, and then return to the enclosure, when a moose skin will probably be thrown among them. The smartest will seize and run away with it in order to secure it for himself, doing as was done with the grease; but this time every one that can catch hold of the skin, while one seizes a knife and cuts away between the hands, until each finds himself possessed only of what he was able to grasp. This goes on for several days, accompanied by wrestling, pushing on a strong pole, fifty or sixty against an equal number, racing, &c. After this the beads are distributed as before stated, the fence is pulled down, harangues are delivered, strong professions of eternal faith and good will are made, when each party takes its departure for its own land, and the term of mourning is at an end.

Their knowledge of a Supreme Being, if they have any at all, is very limited. They know nothing of the soul. They say man has reason, acquired from education, imitation, or experience, which increases with age; for instance, they say a child has no education, no experience—that is, no reason; or if he has, it is so weak or imperfect that he will crawl straight into the fire without the slightest fear of the consequences. If he had a soul, which is part of the Great Spirit himself, he would be as wise when born as at any time of his life; more so, in fact, for he is purer, having just come from his Maker. Neither would he require education or experience to guide him through life. They believe in a future state of rewards and punishments—that is, they believe they will be successful or unfortunate in the world to come according as they have acted well or ill in this; that those who have been poor and miserable in this world, if they have committed no heinous crimes, will be happy in the next; also, that the relative states of a wicked and prosperous man, and that of a poor, despised, ill-treated though innocent person, may be reversed hereafter; that the two will change places, as it were.

They have an imaginary person, a good angel, common to all, who is supposed to guard them from evil and supply their wants. This good angel is supplicated when they start on a hunting expedition, and is supposed to have the power of changing his shape and appearance. The story goes that an old woman found

him as a little boy, brought him to her camp and took care of him. This boy made a pair of large hunting snow-shoes for himself, which excited the ridicule of the men at the idea that a ragged, miserable little urchin like him should pretend to require and use such a thing. The boy, however, paid no attention to their scoffs, but continued to be kind and attentive to the old woman, his grandmother, as he called her. His origin was unknown, and he could not give any account of where he had come from. Altogether there was something mysterious about the child which kept him apart from the rest. Whenever they were in distress for want of food and their best hunters could kill nothing, some of them would fall on a fresh track, which, following up, would invariably lead them to a freshly killed animal. From this spot the track and all vestige of the unknown hunter disappeared. This continued for some time until at length suspicion fell on the strange boy and his large hunting snow-shoes. People were set to watch him, and it was found that he was in the habit of leaving the camp secretly, when the others were asleep or otherwise occupied, and returning again in the same mysterious manner. In this way he was discovered to be the unknown hunter and their benefactor. This, however, did not improve his condition with the others. He still continued to be the poor neglected and despised boy he was when they found him. After a time, in winter, the Indians killed a great number of deer. The boy asked them for a piece of fat, which in their arrogance they refused to give. That night he disappeared, and no vestige of him could be found but his clothes, which were discovered hanging on a tree. About a month after he again appeared among them as a grown-up man and well dressed. He told them that he had gone to live in the moon, from whence he would continue to afford them his protection so long as they deserved it; that when they were in distress they were to supplicate his aid, and he would send them relief, with this reservation, that in consequence of their having refused him a piece of fat when he asked them, all animals would in future be lean in winter, and fat only in summer. Since then he has continued to live in the moon, and is ever ready to answer the prayers of the hunter who demands his aid before going on a hunting expedition.

They believe in a future state of bliss, where they are to live forever, in the same bodies they occupied while here. The principal features of this paradise are pleasant hunting grounds, where there is an eternal summer, fat animals, no sickness, no death, with exemption from all labor beyond preparing the meat of the animals they kill for food; but they have, notwithstanding, a great fear of death, and a particular aversion to being buried in the ground. The idea of their bodies being destroyed by worms is horrible. For this reason they enclose the body in a neatly hollowed piece of wood, and secure it to two or more trees about six feet from the ground. A log about eight feet long is first split in two and each of the parts carefully hollowed out to the required size. The body is then enclosed and the two pieces well lashed together preparatory to being finally secured, as before stated, to the trees.

The widow or widows of the deceased are obliged to remain near the body for a year to protect it from animals, &c. When it is perfectly decayed, and nothing but the bones remain, they are burned and the ashes collected and secured in a small box, which is hung up on the end of a painted pole, with a piece of painted wood fixed in the ground to mark the last resting-place of their departed friend. After this the women are allowed to marry again. They begin to dress their hair, and put on beads and other ornaments to attract admirers, to go through the same observances again, should they a second time become widows.

Great or heinous crimes with the Loucheux are thieving—that is, wilful theft—and murder of the innocent by shamanism; also lying; yet they are much given to telling lies and speaking scandal. Employing wealth (beads) as a means of taking away life—that is, paying away beads to a medicine-man to take away the



life of another, especially if he be innocent—is a great crime, but the killing of an enemy in a fair stand-up fight is honorable, although they seldom act up to their principles. A Loucheux prefers the safest side of valor, and hardly ever makes an attack unless he is pretty certain of coming off without harm.

Formerly the young women had their chins tattooed in perpendicular lines from the corner of the mouth to the chin. Latterly the practice has been discontinued. Until the introduction of fire-arms by the Company, they made use of bows and arrows in the chase, also of twisted deerskin thongs for snaring the deer and moose. Their arms of defence were the bow and arrow and the knife; their clothing is of dressed deerskin in the summer, and in winter the same with the hair on. They live in conical lodges, rather flat at the top, made of deerskins dressed with the hair on, as well described in Sir John Richardson's work.

### 3.—THE KUTCHIN TRIBES.—*Jones.*

The Kutchin may be said to inhabit the territory extending from the Mackenzie, at the mouth of Peel's river, latitude 68°, longitude 134°, to Norton's sound, living principally upon the banks of the Youcon and Porcupine rivers, though several of the tribes are situated far inland, many days' journey from either river. The Kutchin nation is very numerous, and is divided into about twenty-two different tribes, each speaking a dialect of the same language, and bearing a very great resemblance to each other in habits and customs. The dress is the same among all the tribes. According to their traditions they were created here, but their account is so intensely obscene that I fear to write it.

*Character.*—In this they differ entirely from the Tinneh tribes of the Mackenzie, being generous, honest, hospitable, proud, high-spirited, and quick to revenge an injury; in short, bearing a much greater resemblance to the Plain tribes than any other of the northern Indians. They were once very numerous, but wars among themselves, disease, and famine have reduced their aggregate very much. One or two of the tribes are nearly extinct.

*Physical appearance.*—The average height of the men is about five feet eight inches, though there are numbers six feet high. The women average five feet three inches, and are very strongly made. The color of the skin is dusky, the hair and eyes black. The men are completely destitute of beard, and both men and women are intensely ugly.

*Dress.*—The men's summer dress consists of a shirt, pointed before and behind, the point nearly reaching to the knee; trousers, and shoes, both sewed together, all made of dressed deer-skin without the hair. The shirt has a broad fringe of beads across the breast, and there is a broad band of beads down the front of the legs of the trousers. Both fringe and band were in former times made of *Hiagua* shells (*Dentalium*) or of wooden beads made from willows. The dress of the women is nearly the same, differing only in the shirt reaching below the knee and not being pointed. The winter dress is the same, but is made of deer-skin, with the hair on and turned inside. Sometimes the shirt is made of muskrat or rabbit-skin, but in this case the hair is turned outwards. Mittens of deer or sheep skin, with the hair inside, and a cap of rabbit-skin, with the hair outside, complete the winter dress. The children are dressed in the same way, but have the mittens sewed to the shirt sleeves, instead of being fastened to a line passing over the neck as in the case of the men and women, and their hood is fastened to the shirt, and draws off and on like the hood of a Canadian capote. The men paint themselves with vermilion in lines across the face; they use also a kind of powder from the mountains exactly resembling black lead; they powder their hair with goose down and a kind of red earth during their feasts. The women tattoo their chins with lines from the mouth to the throat by puncturing the skin and rubbing in the black powder mentioned before. The men always, and the women sometimes, bore a hole in the end of the nose, between the nostrils, and insert an ornament into it. Among the Kut-cha-Kutchin, Vondt-way-

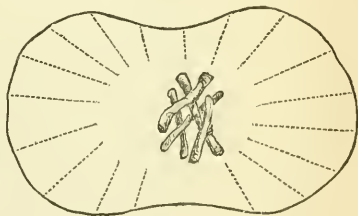
Kutchin, Nat-sit-Kutchin, this ornament consists of four Hiagna shells fastened together, but among the Hong-Kutchin and other tribes a metal ring is used sometimes instead. Making an incision in the under lip, or flattening the heads of infants, are quite unknown among them.

*Food.*—This consists for the most part of venison or fish, though they eat the mountain sheep and goat, rabbits, partridges, wild fowl, and, in the winter, bears. The bears are not often eaten in summer, as their flesh is not good at that time. The country is full of game of all kinds; moose abound in one part, deer in another.

*Dwellings.*—These are movable, and are thus constructed: deer skins are dressed with the hair on, and sewed together, forming two large rolls, which are stretched over a frame of bent poles. The lodge is nearly elliptical, about twelve or thirteen feet in diameter, and six feet high, very similar to a tea-cup turned bottom upwards. The door is about four feet high, and is simply a deer skin, fastened above and hanging down. The hole to allow the smoke to escape is about four feet in diameter. Snow is heaped up outside the edges of the lodge, and pine brush spread on the ground inside, the snow having been previously shovelled off with snow-shoes. The fire is made in the middle of the lodge, and one or more families, as the case may be, live on each side of the fire, every one having his or her own particular place.

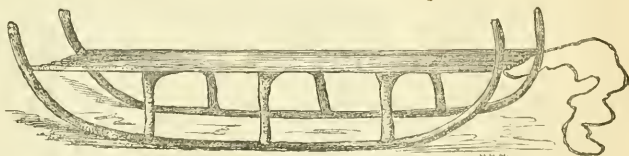


Elevation of hut.



Ground plan of hut.

In travelling, the women haul the lodges, poles, rolls, blankets, kettles, &c., upon wooden trunnions, something similar to the American sleigh, only the runners are turned up behind as well as before, thus being equally fitted to move backwards or forwards. When the day's journey is finished, the men put up the lodges; but when a lodge has to be removed only a few yards, the women do it. When a number of lodges are placed together, no regular form of arrangement is observed, except that the doors are all turned one way, that is, to the leeward. They have no lodges or buildings set apart for public purposes, though they certainly have an enclosed place for medicine dances, feasts, &c., for the dead.



Kutchin sled.

*Arts.*—There is little to say upon this head. They have no pottery; and their only vessels were constructed of bark, wood, matting, or sheep horns. The birch bark vessels are usually square or oblong; wooden troughs are used as dishes, and wooden or horn spoons are large enough to hold a pint. They are never made so small as a table-spoon. The kettles were, and still are made, by the Hong-Kutchin at least, of tamarack roots woven together. These kettles are very neat; hair and dyed porcupine quills are woven into them. The water is

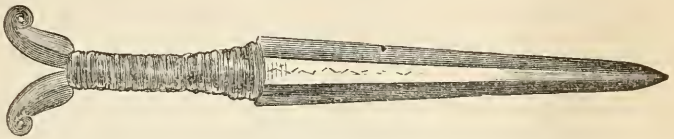
boiled by means of stones heated red hot and thrown into the kettle. The arrow-heads are of bone for wild fowl, or bone tipped with iron for moose or deer; the bow is about five feet long, and that of the Hong-Kutchin is furnished with a small piece of wood, three inches long by one and a half broad and nearly one thick, which projects close to the part grasped by the hand. This piece catches the string and prevents it from striking the hand, for the bow is not bent much. There are no individuals whose trade it is to make spears, bows, or arrows. They make knives out of 8-inch or 10-inch files; these are long and narrow, pointed and double edged; one side has a ridge running from the handle to the point, the other side is slightly hollowed. The blade and handle are made of the same piece of steel, and that part grasped by the hand is covered

with dressed deer-skin, and the top of the handle is curved.

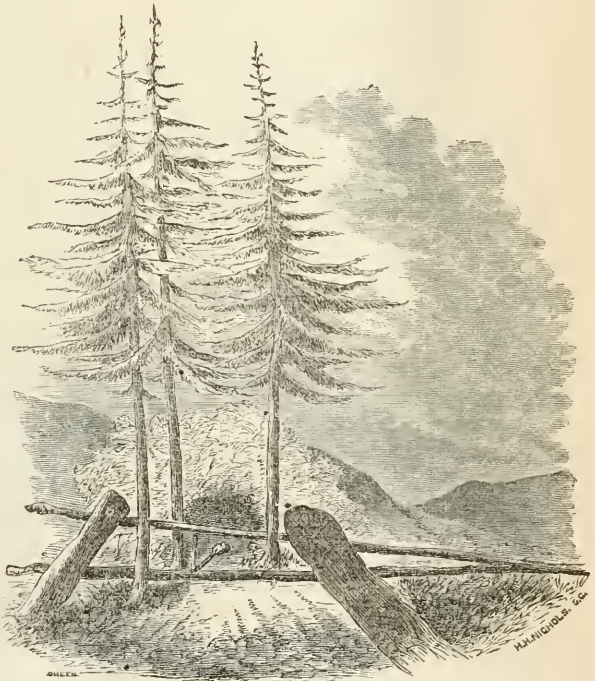
They have no means of

spinning. They weave kettles of tamarack roots, shirts of strips of rabbit-skin, and caps of the same material. For dyeing they use berries and a kind of grass growing in swamps. Foxes, martens, wolves, and wolverines are caught in traps; moose deer, lynxes, rabbits, and marmots are taken in snares. The general mode of killing moose is to stalk them. In the spring they sometimes run them down on snow-shoes, and in the fall, when the moose are rutting, the hunter provides himself with a shoulder blade of the same animal; he then approaches the male as close as possible, and rubs the bone against the trees. The moose charges at once, mistaking the sound for that made by another male rubbing his horns against the trees.

They sometimes surround an island where the moose are known to be, and kill them



Kutchin knife.



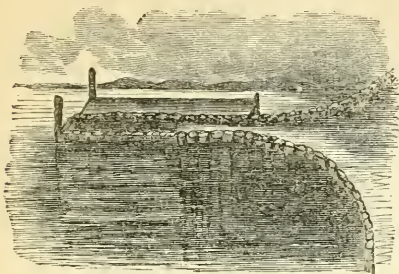
Marten trap.

NOTE.—The marten trap is adjusted as shown in the figure. It consists of two long sticks of wood, the end of one held above the other by a short upright piece, the lower end of which rests on the end of a short horizontal twig carrying the bait. An enclosure of brush or twigs is built up behind the bait, so that the only access to it is between the logs. When the bait is touched the horizontal twig is disturbed, the upright is thrown down, and the upper stick falls, crushing the animal. The short logs laid over the stick serve to secure sufficient weight to kill the marten.



when they run out on the ice or plunge into the river, though this mode is very seldom used, the general way being to stalk them.

Deer are chased on snow-shoes, the hunter loading and firing as he runs. They also make deer pounds, and kill numbers of deer at a time in them, with snares, of which there are several hundred in one pound. When there are a large number of Indians together, they sometimes surround a herd of deer.



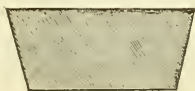
Fishing stage and basket.

mouth of the basket they are immediately pushed to the upper end of it with scoops, made like rackets for playing tennis ball, and then killed with a blow of a stick. When the basket gets inconveniently full, the fish are carried to the shore in a canoe.

The Hong-Kutchin have another way, but this is only used for killing the big salmon, while the bar is for the smaller fish, such as pike, white fish, &c. The largest salmon weighs from forty-five to fifty pounds, the smaller from eighteen to twenty-five pounds. In salmon fishing a stage is erected on the bank of the river, and a man stationed upon it gives notice when a salmon is passing; this he knows by the ripple it makes when ascending the strong current. The other men, each in the middle of his small canoe, push out, all provided with a bag at the end of a pole; the bag is about five feet deep, and has an oblong frame around its mouth three feet long by one broad; the pole is eight or nine feet long. The Indian paddles his canoe in front of the fish, and pushes his net to the bottom right in front of it; as soon as the salmon enters the bag the man pulls it to the surface and stabs the fish with a knife fastened to a pole about five feet long; he then either lifts the salmon into his canoe, or drags it ashore in the net.

This mode of killing the salmon requires very great skill in the management

of the small canoe, as will be easily seen when I say that the canoe is flat-bottomed — is about nine feet long and one broad, and the sides nearly



Kutchin boat.

straight up and down like a wall. The fish makes the water foam when it is first hauled up; if it strikes the canoe it will knock a hole in it; if it goes under the canoe it will upset it; and as none of the Kutchin can swim, the consequences might be unpleasant.

The Taitick-Kutebin make nets similar to ours in shape, constructed of willows instead of twine. The outer bark is scraped off, and the inner taken off and twisted into thread. The Youcon Indians do not make this kind of net,



nor do they know how. Their implements for fishing are the bag for salmon, the bar for the fish in the small rivers, a hook and a spear. They also make a small fish out of bone and hang it upon a line in the water; when the pike approach it they spear them. To make a spear a pole about nine feet long is taken, a spike driven into the end, on each side of which is a flexible piece of bone or wood, with a nail or sharp piece of bone attached to it, both pieces of bone pointing inwards and upwards. When a fish is struck, the two jaws, if I may call them so, are forced open, and the spike driven into the back of the fish, and in jerking up the spear the two



Fish spear.

nails or pieces of bone in the jaws either stick fast in the sides of the fish or meet under its belly, thus preventing it from falling off the spike. The hooks are made and baited in the following manner: The pinion of a goose is taken, and the smaller bone is sharpened and fastened hook-shape to the larger; a piece of fish-skin is cut the shape of a fish and sewed on the hook; that part representing the head is at the point of the hook; that representing the tail is where the bones have crossed each other; a line is then knotted to the larger bone, and all is complete. Muskrats are taken in a scoop, after breaking the rat-house, and beaver with a gaff or net bag, after breaking into their houses, or shot swimming down the rivers.

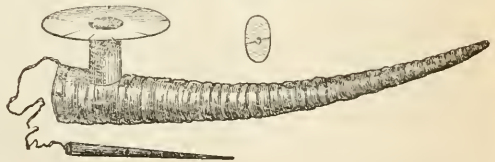
There are several kinds of berries eaten here, principally the cranberry and a kind of blue berry. They also eat a kind of root; I do not know the botanical name for it, but it grows on sandy ground, is sweet, and when roasted tastes like parsnips.

The Kutchin do not practice agriculture at all, and their only *domestic animals* are their dogs, miserable creatures no larger than foxes. They do not make any intoxicating drinks whatever, but are passionately fond of tobacco; this they of course learned from the whites. Most of the Kutchins smoke in the same manner that we do, but some of the tribes use the same pipe as the Esquimaux, and swallow the smoke.



Baited fish hook.

This kind of pipe has a wooden stem twelve inches long, slightly curved upwards; the bowl is well represented by the half of a reel for winding sewing cotton upon, and the hole in the pipe is about the same as that in the spool. A pipe is of this shape; the bowl is made of metal; they do not smoke pure tobacco in it, but mix it with scrapings of willow.



Pipe.

The Kutchin still retain the bow, which is of the same shape, through all the tribes, with the exception of the small guard in the Hong-Kutchin bow, mentioned before. The quiver is the same, and worn under the left arm; it is furnished with two small loops to hold the bow, thus leaving the hunter both hands free to use his gun. The arrows are placed in the quiver with the notch downwards. The Kutchin are not expert with the bow; no doubt they were better shots before fire-arms were introduced among them. The bow is made of willow, and will not send an arrow, with sufficient force to kill a deer, more than from fifty to sixty yards. The arrows are made of pine.

*Trade.*—The Kutchin-Kutchin, among whom the fort is built, are traders; they make very little for themselves, but buy from the other Indians; their

standard is called a naki eik, (bead clothing;) it consists of long strings of beads joined together at the distance of a foot; the lines are seven feet long. The whole naki eik is equal to twenty-four made beaver, and one of the lines is one or more beaver-skins, according to the value of the beads.

Before the arrival of the whites they had no religion, but they believed in a Supreme Being who would do good to them, but they knew of no evil spirit. One man told me that they had no devil at all before the whites came. They have many superstitions. For instance, when the fire made a hissing noise they threw in some fat, and asked to be able to kill some animal; if a crow passed they asked it for meat, and promised to share it with the crow. There are several rocks that they used to make offerings of beads to, in order that they might be able to kill some animal soon.

*Medicine*—As they had no religion, so they had no priests, as with the southern Indians; nor had they any sacred fire. They had, however, magicians, who could do wonderful things. If you were to believe their own story, they could make wind, prophesy, and when a storm of rain was coming, by putting their medicine bag on a pole at the side of the lodge next to the storm, they could make the clouds turn and the rain fall in another place.

The medicine man, whose profession it is, or, rather, who professes to cure all diseases whenever he pleases, is rather an important man among them. His treatment consists of singing barbarous songs over the sick person and performing all kinds of antics; he is also a magician; in fact, there is little or no difference between them. They practice blood-letting also, *ad libitum*, and for every complaint, from a headache to a pain in the big toe. As for plants, they have no knowledge of them whatever, except one which they eat and another which is poison; this last is never used for any purpose.

*Government*.—They are governed by the same chiefs in peace and in war. The authority of a chief is very limited, for the Indians are very unruly, and not at all disposed to submit to authority. The chiefs are chosen either on account of their wisdom or courage, and not at all on account of birth. They have no insignia of office, and as for privileges they have all that they can take, and none that the others can withhold from them. The chiefs and old men are all who are entitled to speak in council, but any young man will not hesitate to get up and give his seniors the benefit of his wisdom.

*Law*.—They have no law; or, rather, the injured party takes the law in his own hand. For theft, little or no punishment is inflicted; for adultery, the woman only is punished, being beaten and sometimes thrown off by her husband, and instances are not wanting of the woman being put to death; for murder, the friends or relations of the murdered man revenge his death; but if a medicine man is paid to kill him, and the man happens to die, the medicine man is innocent, and the one who paid him is the guilty one.

*Social life*.—Slavery is practiced among them. Any poor creature who has no friends is made a slave. Female chastity is prized, but is nearly unknown. The treatment of women by their husbands is very bad; they are, in fact, little better than slaves. If a Kutchin is eating he does not allow his wife to eat with him, but after he is satisfied he throws her some meat just as he does to his dogs. She cuts and hauls his fire-wood; she hauls his lodge, kettles, and property when the camp is moved; she hauls the meat to the camp in winter and carries it in summer. During the warm weather she dries the meat, carries him water, makes his clothes, laces his snow-shoes, and, indeed, does all the drudgery of the camps; but in travelling the men do a little—just a little; they go before, making a track, and stop at such a place as they think the women will be able to reach about nightfall. They choose a level place just large enough for a lodge, scrape off the snow, line it with pine brush, cut some few armfuls of dry willows, and the women put up the lodge when they arrive.

The men always cook. If a wife will not obey her husband she gets a good beating. Children are generally well treated by their parents.

They have no regular festivals, but when a man of consequence dies his friends make a dance, as the whites call it, in his honor. A space some twenty yards square is railed in, a fire lighted in the middle, and various games are played, such as putting a pole across the fire, one party trying to push the other to one end of the enclosure, or one takes a dressed deer-skin and runs off with it; the fellow, if he is nearly caught, drops the skin, when another takes it and is chased by all the rest in his turn. At last the deer-skin is seized by as many as can find room to take hold; it is then cut up, each retaining the piece in his hand. Sometimes bladders of grease are used instead of deer-skin. Now and then they all gather in the enclosure, and, standing round the fence, sing mournful songs and make speeches. This continues for ten or twelve days, when the fence is thrown down, and the beads and other things provided by the person making the dance are divided, each person receiving a present in proportion to his rank; but this present is not entirely gratis, for some months afterwards the giver will come and say: "I gave you thirty 'made' beaver; pay me fifteen and keep fifteen;" which has to be done, of course. The same way when a person dies, if he is a great man among them. Four men make his grave, or, rather, either burn him or hang him up in a coffin. These four are paid as follows: The first gets thirty, and pays ten made beaver; the next twenty-five, and pays ten; the next fifteen, and pays five; the next twelve, and pays three. The coffin, when the body was to be buried that way, was supported upon a stage, with a knife, bow and arrows, a flint fastened to a stick, a stone to strike it on to make fire, and a piece of the fungus that grows on a birch tree for tinder, with some touch-wood also. The body was dressed in the best they had and painted, and was placed in the coffin with the various things mentioned above. The men who made the grave or buried the corpse lived apart for two moons. A man was put on the stage if he was well liked; and they used to burn them to keep the maggots from eating the corpse.

There is no ceremony observed at marriage or birth. A man will sometimes take a small girl ten or twelve years old for his wife; but this is merely a precaution to secure her, as she cannot live with him as a wife at that age. A man may take a wife of the same band to which he himself belongs; but if he take a wife from another tribe, the children belong to the tribe of their mother.

A woman must live apart from her husband during her monthly terms. They are in the same lodge, but a partition made of willow is between them. A young woman must live entirely apart in a separate lodge during her first two terms, or she will spoil the hunting of the men. All the Kutchin are divided into three castes, called, respectively, Tchit-che-ah, Tenge-rat-sey, and Nat-sah-i. It used to be customary for a man belonging to one of these castes to take a wife from one of the others, but this has fallen into disuse.

With the Kutchin the *father* takes his name from his *son* or *daughter*, not the son from his father, as with us. The father's name is formed by the addition of the word *tee* to the end of the son's name; for instance, Que-ech-et may have a son, and call him Sah-neu. The father is now called Sah-neu-tee, and his former name of Que-ech-et is forgotten. They sometimes change a woman's name from Toat-li to Sah-neu-behan, or Sah-neu's mother.

*War.*—The murderers—it would be ridiculous to call them warriors—array themselves in paint and put three eagle feathers in their hair. Before setting out they join in a dance similar to the one for the dead; but at the end of it the men get into a line on one side and the women on the other; the men then run at the women, the latter lie down, the men jump over them, and the man who falls will be killed in the fight. The dance over, the party set out, killing everything they meet—foxes, crows, and every living thing—so that it may not give notice of their approach. When they meet the enemy they pretend to be very

great friends. After some time—perhaps days after their arrival—they seize the opportunity when their hosts are off their guard and plunge their knives into their hearts. Their weapons were the bow, arrow and knife. They murdered men, women, and children, except such of the women as took the fancy of their brutal conquerors, whom they took and treated no worse than the women of their own tribe.

They have no knowledge of scalping, nor do they shave their heads.

The changes introduced among them by the whites are as follows :

There is far less murdering than in former times. The women do not kill their female infants. The young men do not strangle their parents when they are too old to be of service, and become a burden upon them.

They use the gun instead of the bow in hunting, and iron axes and knives instead of stone, and they treat their women better.

I forgot to mention in the proper place, that in war, when a man kills his enemy, he cuts all his joints.



Indian cradle.

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