



ABORIGINES IN WINTER.

alas! when it was too late, several successive proclamations were issued by the British Government to restrain the murderous hatred of the white settlers for the poor savages, and to protect them from further molestation. They were, however, unheeded, and but a short time afterwards, the only traces that were visible of this noble race were a few grassy mounds, decaying deer fences and ruined wigwams.

An interesting feature in the Beothic character, which is also prominent in that of North American Indians, generally, as well as the Eskimos, was their great reverence for the bodies of their dead. Cormack, the earliest explorer of the interior of Newfoundland, tells us that there were among them four modes of burial, which varied according to the rank of the deceased.

The first was to wrap the body in deer skins and to place it full length on the floor of a hut or tomb previously constructed, whose dimensions varied from eight to ten feet square, and four or five feet high. It was floored with square poles, and the roof was covered with birch rind.

Another mode was to substitute a winding sheet of birch rind for that of deer skins, and to place the deceased, together with his property, consisting of snow-shoes, tomahawk, bows and arrows, on a scaffold about four and a half feet from the ground. The thus depositing his property with the deceased would seem to point to a belief on the part of the Indians in the existence of a future state, the happy hunting grounds, the remembrance of which has so often sweetened the dreams and soothed the dying pillow of our heathen Indian brethren.

A third mode was to place the body, which had been previously wrapped as before in birch rind, on its right side in a box well lined with bark to exclude the weather.

The fourth, last and most common practice was to wrap the body again in birch rind, and to cover it over with a heap of stones in some quiet and secluded spot. Sometimes it was placed a few feet under the ground and the spot covered with stones.

Their wigwams or huts were well constructed buildings, and, if we may judge from what travellers

tell us, exceedingly comfortable. They were usually conical, framed with poles and covered with birch rind, which was overlaid in the manner of tiles, and firmly secured in its place by means of external poles. These wigwams although differing so materially from the Eskimo snow hut, which mushroom like, grows under the hand of the skilful builder in the short space of an hour, were usually constructed in a similar brief space of time, and yet so well and firmly were its several parts knit together that they have been known to stand as solidly and safely as ever for thirty years.

In personal appearance the Beoths are said to have been about five feet ten inches in stature, with black coarse hair, and a complexion somewhat lighter than that of the North American Indians, generally. There is nothing to prove that they possessed any mode of religious worship, if we except a few carved wooden images, which were discovered in one of the tombs above mentioned, by Mr. Cormack; but these, however, may have been, as some authorities conjecture, mere representations or memorials of the persons interred within the tombs. The Florentine writer referred to above states distinctly that they worshipped the heavenly bodies.

We will conclude our observations upon these most interesting, though departed people, by a reference to their mode of capturing the deer, which was at once ingenious and successful. It was not, however, peculiar to the Beothic nation, for we find it practiced even at the present time by the Coyukon Indians of Alaska. A kind of corral or fenced enclosure was constructed, elliptical in form, and open at one end. The last feature is characteristic of the Coyukon deer fences. It was made on the deer trail, usually near the outlet of a wood, or on the banks of the rivers near where the deer swam across. The Beothic deer fences were frequently of great extent, and those portions of them which still exist (and they are numerous) are monuments as well of the diligence as of the skill of those by whom they were originally constructed.

Mr. Cormack says: "Down this noble river (the River Exploits) the steady perseverance and intrepidity of my Indians (Mic-mac) carried me on rafts in four days, to accomplish which otherwise would have probably required two weeks. What arrests the attention most in gliding down the stream is the extent of the Indian fences to entrap the deer. They extend from the lake (Red Indian Lake) downwards continuously on the banks of the river at least thirty miles. There are openings left here and there in them for the animals to go through and swim across the river; and at these places the Indians were stationed to kill them in the water with spears out of their canoes, or at the lake. Here, then, connecting these fences with those on the north-west side of the lake, are at least forty miles of country, easterly and westerly, prepared to intercept all the deer that pass that way