

run among the Indians as at present.

"Mr. Booth could not see how the potlatch could be blamed for the sale of liquor. He could not sympathize with the acts of missionaries in connection with their efforts to prohibit potlatches."

True, the Potlatch may not be blamed for the sale of liquor to Indians, but it may well be blamed for the purchase of it, as it is certainly to be blamed in this district for the manufacture of it.

It is generally supposed that the missionaries are very keen upon suppressing the potlatch, but this is a great mistake. No doubt they would all like to see the end of it, but I do not think they would move for its suppression by law in the interest of religion. It is when a community of Indians begins to develop on the lines of civilization and progress under the missionary's fostering care that the potlatch begins to pinch them, and they cry out to be relieved socially and civilly by law, making of course, their representations through their missionary, consequently our legislators have fallen into the error of regarding it as a case of Missionary *versus* Potlatch in the interests of religious propaganda—an unworthy motive.

"Dr. Walkem said the Dominion government legislated as it did because of the representations made by missionaries that the potlatches retarded the work of Christianization. The thirst for potlatches was strong in every Indian and it was impossible to do anything with them. It was difficult for members to decide whether potlatches should be prevented or not. If the punishment were not so severe the object desired could be more easily reached. Potlatches could not be prohibited by force of law. The Indians would have to be educated up to the matter."

If the missionaries made any representations they did so as speaking for the civilized Indians. I think, (for I was not in the country at the time), that the civilized Indians petitioned the Government, and the missionaries endorsed and forwarded their petition.

With regard to "educating the Indians up to the matter," I would like to know how it is to be done. Indians who adhere to the potlatch will not be taught, nor allow their children to be taught. It is only after a man gives up the potlatch that he can be taught. I wonder if the Songhees of Victoria have been or are being educated up to the matter: time and opportunity have not been lacking in their case.

"Hon. Mr. Eberts said that potlatches were a serious menace to the province. They were demoralizing to the younger members of the tribes. He referred to the recent troubles at Salmon river, when Indians preparing to hold a large potlatch handled policemen rather roughly. If the law could be so amended that potlatches could be held under proper supervision good might result. The missionaries had done good work and their opinions in this matter should not be totally disregarded. If the potlatches were confined to a friendly gathering to settle accounts no great harm could be done in allowing the Indians to hold them."

A missionary's opinion, as such, is worth no more than that of any other man; neither is it worth less. It does not seek credibility as a favour on account of good works. Like the opinion of any other man, its worth depends upon the opportunities afforded and embraced for obtaining information on the subject concerning which the opinion is expressed. As regards the Potlatch the missionary's opinion is the only one of any value, because he is the only white man who lives on the inner side of Indian life and who really does anything for the "welfare" of the Indian.

"Mr. Sword said the province would assume a great responsibility in asking for the repeal of the law. If any trouble resulted, the blame would rest with the province. He moved an amendment to the effect that the Dominion government be requested to inquire into the subject of potlatches with the view of securing a repeal of the law, providing the grievances were well founded.

"Major Mutter said Mr. Sword's amendment might cause delay. He did not see why habits of the natives which were not criminal should be interfered with. The rights of the Indians as well as the prejudices of the missionaries should be considered."

Here again we have the old idea cropping out—Missionary prejudice *versus* Indian rights!

"Mr. Helmcken said that the legislature should not be afraid to take the responsibility of legislation. His resolution was drawn as it was that it might come before the premier of Canada, and from what he knew of that gentleman he was sure he would act in the best interests of all concerned.

"Hon. Mr. Martin, speaking from his experience in the interior, said he saw no harm result from potlatches there. The white men were here by might, and the rights of the Indians should not be trampled upon."

In considering the question of Indian rights one should remember that these "rights" are no longer altogether on the side of savagery with its paint and feathers. Those Indians who have come out on the side of civilization and progress have, in so doing, come into the inheritance of far more important rights than those of making dances and tearing up blankets. In the foregoing report such rights are conspicuous by the absence of all allusion to them, if indeed they had any place in the minds of the Honorable Members taking part in the discussion. And yet the motion was made in the interest of the *welfare* of the Indians! Let me refer my readers to page 18 of this number of the Interchange for an object lesson:—"you must give up Christianity and civilization, and come back to heathenism." This is the Potlatch demanding its rights—the rights that "must not be trampled upon;" asserting its right to trample upon the rights of freedom, religion and civilization!!!

"Mr. Sword's amendment was then carried on a vote of 14 to 13."

—J.B. McC.