

demonstration of savage life—if such degradation can be called life, viz.—The utter darkness of mind and heart evidenced by such customs, and the bounden duty of every White man in British Columbia to do something (at present they do little or nothing) towards lightening this darkness.

—ED.

"Two Christian marriages took place last year, but the women were so taunted, and persuaded to leave their husbands that the two couples left their village rather than be subject to Indian law, one couple remaining north after the fishing and the other south."

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## The Potlatch and Marriage.

FROM what I have seen of Dr. Webb I consider him to be a keen observer, a scientific thinker, and logical in arriving at a conclusion. When we last met in conference we differed entirely in our views of the Potlatch. I maintained the necessity for Government interference as in the case of intoxicating liquor, but the Doctor deprecated any action of the Authorities in the matter. Since then, however, Dr. Webb seems to have obtained a closer and truer view of Potlatch tyranny, and now wonders that the Government sees no need for interference.

The following is an extract from Dr. Webb's annual letter to the Church Missionary Society as published in the Annual Report, 1899—1900, page 490.

—ED.

"Another great hindrance to the conversion of these tribes is the absence of the family unit, and the existence of a system of community whose bondage is absolute. The young man is ready to marry; the young woman (fourteen years of age) is marriageable: what hinders? There is no home to build or furnish, there is abundant fish in the sea and berries in the woods for food; they want for nothing it would seem. But wait! This girl is a marketable article, she is worth so many blankets (their medium of barter); she must be bought; where does the young man get 500 to 1,000 blankets? He borrows ten here, ten there, and so on at 100 per cent. interest(!) and he is then bound hand and foot in one form of the *pollatch*, which means usury in its worst form. He will never be able to pay, unless the girl's father should have a better offer in a few months' time, when the girl is taken from her husband and sold a second time, sometimes a third or fourth. The father of the girl then pays the youth double the number of blankets, and trades away his daughter to the highest bidder. This is not an account of some few exceptional cases; this is the custom, the invariable regular system of marriage as it is and has been for years, and the Indian sees nothing disreputable in it, and the Government no need for interference!"

Another extract from a letter from a missionary's wife is worth quoting in this connection:—

"Four girls who had risen to Fifth Reader, and been in our Home two years, were taken out by their male relatives and will be sold to the highest bidder for the Potlatch, and this in a land over which 'Victoria reigns.'

## How Our Legislators

### View the Potlatch.

A FEW years ago a motion was brought forward in the Provincial Legislature to advise the repeal of the law against potlatching. The discussion upon this motion and the views expressed by Members may be of some interest to readers of the Interchange as showing how our Legislators regard this custom.

The motion was brought forward (I quote from the Times, April 16 '98) by Mr. Helmecken who said:—

".....every member was interested in the welfare of the Indians, and would therefore bear with him while he went rather fully into the subject."

But the only argument I find adduced in support of the motion is that,

"White men would strongly object if a law were enforced prohibiting them from enjoying themselves on the 24th of May, 1st of July or any other holiday, and the Indians had the same right to object because a law was passed prohibiting them from enjoying an ancient and harmless custom."

I repeat over to myself the words:— "*enjoying an ancient and harmless custom*," and a cold shiver runs down my back. How many thousand dollars did this harmless custom cost the government in 1885 on the Skeena? Or does the government know that the murder which led to that expenditure was a potlatch affair? But I have told that story in another place.

"Hon. Mr. Turner said the house should carefully consider the matter before committing itself, as it was one of those things over which the Dominion government had full control. There were harmless amusements connected with potlatches, but he knew that often the Indians carried these orgies to such an extent as to be a serious menace to the community. The chief trouble arose from the indiscriminate and wholesale sale of liquor."

It is a serious fact that, notwithstanding the laws prohibiting the sale of intoxicants to Indians, they can and do get as much liquor as they desire, and manufacture it as well—at least they do so on the Naas. Never at any time during the past twenty years has the sale of liquor had such a free