

AN ALASKAN POTLATCH.

PERHAPS some of my young readers would like to hear about Alaskan feasts and *potlatches* (*potlatch* means a gift).

An Indian wishing to be called a great chief, will for many years deny himself almost everything in order to save his money and blankets that he may build a large house, and give a great feast and *potlatch*.

When he has enough money he puts up the posts to his house. As soon as the house is inclosed he calls all his people from villages far and near to come to the feast. Dancing will be continued for several successive days and nights.

The dancing is very strange; the men stand on one side of the house and the women on the opposite side, swaying themselves backward and forward, and then from side to side singing all the time a dull, low song.

They are dressed in furs and Chilcat blankets—handsome blankets trimmed with red cloth and many rows of white pearl buttons; they wear wooden masks, made in the shape of a bear head, or that of a wolf, a whale, a crow, or an eagle; some are very beautifully carved and painted.

These are preserved, some having been kept for many generations. If the man giving the feast has had any disputes or quarrels with any of his friends, there must now be a settlement before the feasting is begun.

Several of the best young men are selected from the tribe, and are carried bodily by stout men into the house of the enemy, where they are fed and given the very best the house affords.

After a little time white eagle feathers are placed upright in the hair of one of the men, signifying that a reconciliation is desired; if the man allows the feathers to remain it is understood that he is ready for peace which is then declared.

After a day or two more of hospitality from the enemy, the young men are carried out of the house and returned to their own homes and tribe, and the feasting is begun.

Large earthen wash bowls, filled with seal oil and berries, also crackers, are placed before the guests who have gathered into the new house and are squatted upon the floor. This food is eaten in large quantities and with great relish.

After the feasting the *potlatch* begins. Hundreds of blankets, large bolts of muslin, etc., are distributed among the guests; some of the blankets are given out whole, while others are torn into strips ten and twelve inches in width. The calico and muslin are given out in yard lengths. This would seem a great waste of material, but the pieces of blankets are sewed together very neatly by the women, and made into shirts or coats; some are, indeed, quite pretty, and might well be termed coats of many colors.

The man giving the feast has made himself absolutely poor, having given away all his hard years' earnings; but it matters not, for by his *much giving* he has become a very great chief, and his name will go down to posterity.—*Over Sea and Land*.

BOYS THAT SUCCEED.

"A new boy came into our office to-day," said a wholesale grocery merchant to his wife at the supper table. "He was hired by the firm at the request of the senior member, who thought the boy gave promise of good things. But I feel sure that the boy will be out of the office in less than a week."

"What makes you think so?"

"Because, the first thing he wanted to know just exactly how much he was expected to do."

"Perhaps you will change your mind about him?"

"Perhaps I shall," replied the merchant; "but I don't think so."

Three days later the business man said to his wife: "About that boy you remember I mentioned three or four days ago. Well, he is the best boy that has ever entered the store."

"How did you find that out?"

"In the easiest way in the world. The first morning the boy began work he performed faithfully and systematically the exact duties assigned, which he had been so careful to have explained to him. When he had finished he came to me and said: 'Mr. H—, I have finished all that work. Now what can I do?'"

"I was a little surprised, but I gave him a little job of work and forgot all about him until he came to my room with the question, 'What next?' That settled him for me. He was the first boy that ever entered our office who was willing and volunteered to do more than was assigned him. I predict a successful career for that boy as a business man."

Business men know capacity when they see it, and they make note of it. Willingness to do more than the assigned task is one of the chief stepping stones to commercial success.—*Selected*.