

A DAY WITH OUR INDIANS.



OVER the boundless plains of the great Northwest, but a few years ago, roamed numerous tribes of dusky warriors. It was there over the rolling prairies that the red-men had hunted the buffalo, followed the war-path, and smoked the pipe of peace. But one day, came their destroyers, the pale-faces for destroyers they truly proved themselves to be. And the prophesy of the aged missionary, the noble Father Lacombe "I at in fifteen years there will not be a full-blooded Indian alive on the Canadian prairie," has been almost fulfilled. Now instead of the piercing war-whoop, and the solemn "tum-tum" of the Indian drum, are heard the shrill whistle of the locomotive, and the hearth-songs of the whites.

As the stranger travelling over our trans-continental railway is whirled across the grand expanse of level country stretching from the "Prairie City" to the Rocky Mountains, he looks in vain for the tribes of red-skins who once held full sway over the northern plains. Then arises in his mind the question, what has become of the noble red-men? The story is both short and sad. Many of them have long since departed for the "Good-Hunting Grounds," to dwell with their fore-fathers in the realm of the "Great Spirit." While the few who have survived the onward march of civilization are to be found in small bands on the government reserves of Canada and the United States.

The tourist who is interested in aboriginal research may obtain an abundant and rick stock of knowledge, concerning the peculiar traits of character, customs, etc., of our Indians, by visiting any of the reserves. Upon his arrival he is promptly presented to the chiefs of the tribe, in whose company, the inspection of their "Government Home" is commenced. As the traveller makes the rounds, many things with which he meets will prove of great interest. But perhaps that which will attract his attention first

is the "Tepee," or wigwam, in which those Indians live who have not as yet built houses for themselves. This singular habitation is made of buffalo-hide in the form of a cone and supported by four poplar poles firmly planted in the ground in a circle, the upper ends being lashed together with sinew. In this miserable hut both winters and summers are spent. Although of small dimensions it is all the more convenient for being so, and convenience is above all what the Indians desire. So, perchance, becoming tired of their present location, it is the more easy to remove. One would be almost at a loss to conceive where our dusky friends keep their stores and other moveables, the wigwams being so small that there seems no room for anything, after they and their dogs have entered. Their ingenuity, however, supplies the want of room, and answers all the purposes of bags, baskets, etc. An inner lining of birch bark is drawn between the poles so as to form hollow pouches all around. In these pouches are stored their goods. One set holds a stock of dried deer's flesh; another, dried fish; dressed skins, and a thousand other miscellaneous articles occupy the rest of the reservoirs.

Another thing that will immediately draw one's attention is a peculiar custom which is retained among them, even to the present day, that is, the manner in which the mothers carry their young. In long journeys, the children are placed in upright baskets of a peculiar form, which are fastened around the necks of the mothers by straps of deer-skin. But the very young infant is swathed to a sort of flat cradle secured with flexible hoops to prevent it from falling out. To these machines they are strapped so as to be unable to move hand or foot. Much finery is often displayed on the outer covering, and on the bandages that confine the *papoose*, as the baby is called. There is a sling attached to the cradle that passes over the squaws neck, the back of the child being placed to the back of the mother, and its face outward.