

cleanly method of procedure, as stated by the writer of the following letter, himself a full-blooded Indian, and highly advanced in civilization and intellectual acquirements, and formerly an Upper Canada College Boy :—

Toronto, October 20, 1862.

DEAR SIR,—Since I saw you last, I have been up to Manitoulin Island. While there I took the opportunity of making enquiries concerning the juice of wild grapes, as prepared by the Indians ; and I now give you the substance of the statements made to me on the subject by individuals whom I considered best able to afford information, as they were in a position to speak from their own personal knowledge and observation. It appears that in former times, some of the Indians who inhabited or frequented the southern shores of Lake Michigan,—where wild grapes grow in great abundance,—were in the habit of gathering these grapes for the sake of the juice. The Indians, it appears, after going through the process of pressing the fruit, usually poured the liquor into empty whiskey kegs, or kegs having contained some other strong liquor, which they carefully fastened, and buried under the sand during the winter. That in the spring, on their return from their hunting grounds, they dug up the kegs, and made use of their contents as a delightful beverage. But in addition to its pleasant taste, I am informed, the liquor had strength enough to make half-intoxicated those who drank it, especially the younger members of a family. No experiment was of course ever made, so far as I am informed, as to whether it would render a person drunk if he took a quantity of it. Perhaps those exhilarating qualities attributed to it by the Indians may, in some measure, be accounted for, by the fact of its being confined in a keg which had previously contained spirituous liquors.

However, upon further inquiries, I learned that the "Medicine Men" among the Indians are acquainted with roots and herbs, the juice of which, obtained by boiling them together or mixing them otherwise, will produce intoxication. These preparations, I am told, are made and administered only as remedies in certain cases of sickness. The drink of some of them is said to cause a pleasant sensation to the person partaking of it, which makes him smoke his pipe with much pleasure, as some people do after taking a glass or two of a strong liquor. But others are so powerful as to render at once the patient, after taking the medicine—say a tumbler full—incapable of physical exertion. In such cases, he is carefully laid upon his back and closely watched, as the least motion of the body makes him faint : he remains in that state for a whole day or more, not however wholly deprived of his senses. It would appear that remedies of this kind are resorted to only in extreme cases of sickness.

From what is stated above, I think it is evident that the Indians knew in their wild state how to prepare intoxicating drinks from various roots, herbs, and bark. The labour, expense, and difficulty in acquiring and procuring the proper mixtures, have no doubt been the cause of the knowledge of those remedies being confined to a few individual Indians.

I beg permission to add, that it has been stated to me that the "Medicine Men" knew also how to counteract the effects of whiskey and other spirituous liquors. A person furnished with the antidote may drink a quantity of liquor sufficient to intoxicate three or four individuals ; still he would retain his physical strength and the full use of his senses. Hence formerly, when a person was invited to a great feast, where he knew there would be much drinking, and perhaps quarrelling, and in apprehension that his personal enemies might avail themselves of the occasion to maltreat him, he usually took the precaution of having about him the counteracting medicine : provided thus, no matter how much he drank, he was not hurt ; and others, he could not be made drunk, and was always in a position to defend himself when attacked.

Yours truly,

JAMES BOVILL, Esq., M. D., Toronto.

F. ASSIKINACH.