

now occupy. They are no longer dependant upon the forest for their supply of food and clothing ; but many of them, on the banks of the Assiniboine, Red River, and Lake Manitobah, possess horses and join the half-breeds in their annual spring and fall hunts. Notwithstanding this intercourse and blending of different tribes, most of the superstitions and customs peculiar to each are still maintained and practised.

It is often asked whether the thrilling descriptions of savage life, as given in Cooper's delightful romances, are imaginary or real ; and, if real, whether they exist now among the tribes which have long been familiar with civilized man, such as the Plain Crees, the Sioux, the Swampys, and the Ojibways. It is enough to visit the secluded Ojibway graves, on the banks of the Red River, and behold there Sioux scalps decorated with beads, bits of cloth, coloured ribbons, and strips of leather suspended at the extremity of a long slender stick near the head of the grave, to feel satisfied that one barbarous custom still prevails. But to be an eye witness of a scalp dance or a skull dance is more than enough to press home the conviction that the fiendish passions, so faithfully described by Cooper, still find expression in violent gesture, loud vociferation, triumphant song, and barbarous feasting with undiminished strength and bitterness, even after a century's intercourse with civilized men.

In the following pages, I shall endeavour to describe some incidents which will show how far old superstitions and customs prevail among the Indians occupying the country I visited last summer, between Red River and the south branch of the Saskatchewan.

Early last spring, the warlike bands of Ojibways, called the Lac la Pluie Indians, were thrown into a state of savage excitement by the arrival of messengers from their friends on the Red River, with tidings that two Sioux had been killed and scalped in the Plains. In testimony of this triumph, they brought with them two fingers severed from the hands of the unfortunate Sioux. The announcement of the intelligence that the scalps would be sent after their Red River brethren had celebrated war dances over them, was received with wild clamour and shouting. After the scalps had been carried from hand to hand and the victory that won them triumphed over with dancing, singing, and feasting, they would be returned to the warriors who took them, and finally suspended over the graves of relatives or friends mourning the loss of any of their kindred by the hands of the Sioux.