

## LIFE IN RUPERT'S LAND IN THE OLDEN TIME.

and his wife and myself started off to the place where the conjuror was to perform. Mr Cummings said that we would go a little early in order that I might have time to examine the premises before the performances commenced.

On arriving at the grounds I saw that the tent was erected by driving several sticks or poles in the ground in a circle. These poles were drawn together at the top by means of a line made of buffalo skin, called shagnappi. The tent was then covered with dressed buffalo skins tied firmly on with the same aforesaid "shagnappi," leaving a small aperture at the bottom for the convenience of the conjuror in entering into the tent.

Now this man Bear, the conjuror was a decrepit old man, who had been poisoned by some of his tribe, whereby the skin of his hands was a complete mass of sores, and his finger nails about dropping off. This habit of the Indians in poisoning one another shall be related further on.

About sunset Mr. Bear made preparations to enter his tent, but before doing so I was permitted to examine the inside to see that the Bear was the only one domiciled therein. After this the Bear entered and closed the door behind him. Immediately after this the tent began to sway backwards and forwards while gradually was heard several voices speaking in the tent. This was explained to me as the several spirits who entered the tent, such as the spirits of the fox, the goose, the crane, and the north wind and so forth. The entrance of each spirit was marked by a thump, as if some heavy body fell on the ground. Meanwhile the tent kept swaying from one side to the other continu-

ally while an incessant chattering of talk was kept up. This lasted the whole night without intermission, which seemed very wonderful to me, I could hardly believe that there was anything of the supernatural in these operations, and yet there were some things I could not comprehend. I could not account for the swaying of the tent all night, I could hardly believe that Bear, whose hands were in such a putrefied state and who was an old man weak in body could sway a tent like that continually without cessation. He might imitate the various sounds I heard, which in itself was barely possible, but the moving of the tent to me was inexplicable.

Through the interpretation of Mr. Cummings, who was an excellent Indian scholar, I had an interview with the conjuror Bear, and questioned him pretty closely as to what he knew of the science of conjuring. He told me that in order to be a conjuror one must go through a certain ceremony, and be initiated in a regular manner, part of which ceremonies consisted of fasting for a considerable length of time, and paying particular attention to dreams and other signs. It is the usual custom for a novice to begin the discipline he must undergo in order to become a conjuror, to erect a sleeping stage up among the thick branches of the trees and after fasting to retire ther to sleep. Whether waking or sleeping he could not tell, but in such a case he was visited by spirits who gave him directions what to do, and also gave him the power of calling spirits to the conjuring tent. Bear told me that these were about the most of the ceremonies he was permitted to make known, the great bulk of them being secret and on no account to be made known.