



KOOTENAY INDIANS, ST. EUGENE VILLAGE, NEAR FORT STEELE, B.C.

THE PAGAN INDIANS OF CANADA.

By Marshall Owen Scott, Press Gallery, Ottawa.

THE painted red men of the prairies and forests we still have with us. In the Sun Dance, the Potlatch and other pagan practices,—the war-whoop is heard, and the tomahawk and scalping-knife flash in the light. The revolting savagery of the Wehndigo¹ has

not yet been completely stamped out, and the horrible feastings of the Hamatas² have not entirely ceased.

But civilization is winning its way. The best strains of Indian blood are sending in their young to be educated in ever-growing numbers. The most de-

¹ Report of Deputy Superintendent, Department of Indian Affairs, December 31, 1899, page xxix.:

"The Indians as a class are law-abiding in a marked degree, and serious crime is rare among them. In the course of the year some few of their number were charged with having taken human life. One case was the deliberate and apparently unprovoked murder of an inoffensive settler at Kamloops. . . . The other cases were of a widely different character, and occurred among Indians far removed from civilizing influences, and the taking of life was prompted by motives of self-preservation and sanctioned by established tribal usage.

The Indians put to death were what the Wood Crees call 'Wehndigos,' that is, possessed of an insane desire to kill and eat the flesh of their victims, and such cases are by no means uncommon among them. The lust to kill would not apparently differ materially from the homicidal mania which occasionally seizes upon members of any community, and the explanation of the peculiar and revolting cannibal accompaniment will no doubt be found in the direction given by insanity to the impulses of people in whose lives the main occupation and all-absorbing interest is killing in order to eat, and with whom the ideas of killing and eating are consequently inseparably connected."