

climbing the sacrificial pole with the face reverently turned toward the sun, placed the offering on the top of the pole. This year seven or eight persons went through the above ceremony. The other sacrificial ceremony consisted of the slitting of the flesh in two pieces in each breast. A wooden skewer was placed through each breast; a rope fastened to the sacrificial pole was placed around each skewer; and then the suppliant, whistling upon the bone-whistle, jumped about until the flesh gave way. In some instances the flesh was cut so deeply that the men had to press heavily upon the performers' shoulders in order to tear it away. The "shield ceremony" was the same process, only performed on the back, and the rope with a shield attached fastened to the skewers, and the ceremony continued until the suppliant was relieved.

Mr. Riggs, it will be noticed, says that the ceremony was most zealously performed among the most westerly of the Dakota tribes, that is, those which are nearest to the Rocky Mountains. We are thus led to suppose that it may have had its origin among the tribes west of the mountains. Possibly the Blackfeet may have learned it from the tribe from which they acquired the foreign element of their language, and they may have taught it to the western Dakotas and Crees in their neighbourhood. In any case it is clear that they have a mixed religion, as well as a mixed language—which are both facts of considerable interest in ethnological science.

The form of government among the Blackfeet, as among the Algonkin tribes generally, is exceedingly simple, offering a striking contrast to the elaborately complicated systems common among the nations of the Iroquois stock. Each tribe has a head-chief, and each band of which the tribe is composed has its subordinate chief; but the authority of these chiefs is little more than nominal. The office is not hereditary. The bravest or richest are commonly chosen; but in what manner the election is made is not stated. Formerly the principal function of the head-chief consisted in deciding on the question of peace or war. At present it is limited to fixing the place of the camp, or directing a change of encampment. He presides in the council of his tribe, and is, in a conference with other nations, the representative and spokesman of his people.

The term 'confederacy' commonly applied to the union of the Blackfoot tribes is somewhat misleading. There is no regular league or constitution binding them together. 'The tribes are separate,' writes Mr. McLean, 'and the bonds of union are the unity of religious belief, social customs, and language. They united against a common enemy, but I have never heard of their fighting against each other.' Father Lacombe's account is similar. 'The Blackfeet,' he writes, 'have no league or confederation, properly so-called, with councils and periodical reunions. They consider themselves as forming one family, whose three branches or bands are descended from three brothers. This bond of kinship is sufficient to preserve a good understanding among them.' They can hardly be said to have a general name for the whole community, though they sometimes speak of themselves as *Sauketakia*, or 'men of the plains,' and occasionally as *Netsepoyè*, 'or people who speak one language.'

Whether the system of clans, gentes, or totems, as they are variously styled by different writers, is found among the Blackfoot tribes is uncertain, the replies to inquiries on that subject being thus far somewhat indefinite. This system is regarded by some eminent ethnologists