

Indian Women in the Eastern Provinces.

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Most of the Indians east of Manitoba, in the Provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, fall into two classes, civilized and partly civilized. The latter are represented by numerous grades, from the almost purely savage to the half civilized, and as a matter of course, the condition of the women varies accordingly. Except in the most remote portions of the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec, few Indians now live in the old nomadic state, the greater number of them being confined to "Reserves," throughout the provinces named. Among the civilized Indians of the Iroquois and Mississauga tribes many women are as comfortably housed and as well conditioned as their white sisters. Unlike the less advanced Indians they can, and do, speak English fluently, are good cooks, and excellent wives, keeping their houses clean and tidy, and dressing themselves and their children well.

Where there is partial civilization, the Indian women work very hard, for, besides the care of her household, every woman has to help out a scant existence by means of some of the various industries, which are described in a previous article. In their production the women exhibit great skill and, not seldom, a good deal of taste. With the exception of the Iroquois, they are not brilliant successes as cooks, and they seldom care to make any but the simplest dishes. To some extent they conform to the white woman's ideas of dress, but it would be difficult indeed to find any Indian woman, away from the Iroquois and Mississauga Reserves, dressed entirely in modern fashion. The head is usually covered with a shawl of gay hues, which is an indispensable article of attire, although a broad-brimmed straw hat may be worn in summer.

The marriage tie, if such it can be called, is not always binding, separation taking place for trifling causes, and new unions being effected without much difficulty. The Missionaries find this a very difficult problem, and even on the most advanced reserves there is much laxity respecting marital obligations. The Indian woman's life is closely bound up in those of her children from the days of their babyhood, when they are strapped mummy-like on wonderfully carved cradle-boards, and carried on her back, up to their youthful