

tribes of Nootka Indians (*Ts!icā'atn* and *Hōpatc!as'atn*) now living on reserves near Alberni, I was fortunate enough to witness three girls' puberty potlatches. In order to give some idea of the actual conduct of such a ceremony, I shall here content myself with describing the one witnessed on the forenoon of October 16, 1910, reserving a more generalized account of the various features that go to make up puberty ceremonials among the Nootka for the future.

The present ceremony took place in the "potlatch house" of the *Hōpatc!as'atn* tribe, to which the people of both tribes had been invited by the father of the girl, Jimmie George; it was he, her paternal uncle (Big George), and another Indian related to her on her mother's side (Big Frank), that took charge of the potlatch, acting as hosts. In earlier days, when large communal houses were in use, the father or other older male relative conducting the ceremony invited the people to the house in which he lived. The people began to assemble fairly early in the morning, the men, as usual, seating themselves on the board platform along the rear wall of the house and along the left wall (as you enter), while the women disposed themselves along the right wall. Properly speaking, the seats along the rear wall are seats of honour, and in earlier days the nobility among the guests were disposed here, each being entitled to a definite seat according to his rank. Nowadays these matters are not taken so seriously, though even to-day one never sees a woman occupying one of the rear seats in the house. Back of the centre of the room, not very far from the rear wall, was burning a wood fire; a space was left on the bare ground for a fire-place, while the rest of the floor, according to up-to-date fashion, was planked. The floor of the *Ts!icā'atn* potlatch house is more conservative in this respect, being bare throughout. In front of the fire, that is, on the side towards the door, was later placed a big cauldron in which tea was boiled, to be used at the end of the potlatch to feast the people. Up against the rear wall were placed, side by side, two large rectangular boards painted in white, black, and red. The paintings of each of these boards, disposed in a reciprocally symmetrical arrangement, represented a thunder-bird holding a whale in his talons, a wolf at the upper outer corner, and a *we'il!k* (the mythological serpent-belt of the thunder-bird, who, as he zigzags through the air or coils about a tree, causes the lightning) at the upper inner corner; beneath the whale there was a conventional representation of billows. The thunder-bird, who lives on the summit of a mountain difficult of approach, is believed, when in need of game, to fly off to the sea and catch a whale, which he then carries off to his home; the heavy flapping of his wings is what we call thunder. The thunder-bird, his serpent-belt, and the wolf are three of the most important supernatural beings of the Nootka, and figure