

INTECH (1984) associates

1025 Hargrieve Rd., Unit 3,
London, Ontario N6E 4P7

Phone: (519) 686-1970
After Hours: 657-0390

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THE FARMERSVILLE REPORTER.

SOME INDIAN CUSTOMS.

Infamous Treatment of the Women—Revolting Burial Ceremonies.

A letter from Ponca agency, Indian Territory, says: The Poncas number 580, and there are but six half-breeds in the tribe. They have maintained their purity of blood in a remarkable degree, and are, as a consequence, purer in morals than either the Kaws or the Osages. They at one time had a number of half and quarter bloods in the tribe, but these have nearly all died out, and none have been born to fill their places. The Poncas are gaining numerically year after year since coming to this reservation six years ago. They were moved from Baxter Springs here at that time, but came originally from Dakota. In the matter of civilization they get on slowly. Few of the men and none of the women can speak English. They have a large brick school-house, 2½ stories high, with basement capable of accommodating one hundred scholars, and have an actual enrollment of over seventy. There are no laws compelling school attendance. The children are doing fairly, learning to speak English rapidly, and some of the classes are in the Third reader. Mathematics come easy to them.

Nearly half the men wear civilized clothing, and all Ponca women wear petticoats instead of leggings. The blanket is never wholly discarded, however, and seems to be nearly indispensable for a wrap and for bedding. Nearly all prefer boots and shoes to moccasins in bad weather. In the matter of farming eighty to ninety families will raise considerable corn this season, averaging, perhaps, six to eight acres to each family. The agent says there may be eight hundred acres of corn raised this year by the Poncas. They raise some wheat and potatoes, but are sadly deficient in stock of all kinds. Many families have none of any kind, and very few have teams for farming. The tribe is without religious instruction except a Sunday school. There is no mission here of any kind. The men do what outdoor work is done at all. The government issues about one-third rations of salt, sugar, beef, and aid flour.

The tribe has 101,894 acres of land and \$70,000 trust fund at 5 per cent. They also have a treaty value of \$8,000 per annum for five years yet, for clothing, etc. They have leased seven thousand acres of land to J. H. Sherburn, the licensed trader here, for five years, at \$1,700 per annum. He is to fence it all, and is now engaged in that work. Mr. Sherburn came here five years ago a bankrupt, is now lessee of about two-thirds of the reservation, has a fine stock of goods, and nearly two thousand head of cattle.

In preceding letters mention was made of Kaw and Osage polygamy. But a comparison of these tribes and the Poncas and Otoes is greatly to the credit of the former. The Poncas have a number of polygamists—how many could not be definitely ascertained, nor are the instances always known. The practice is open and acknowledged, sanctioned by usage and suzerainty, and if it has not many open advocates it certainly has few or no assailants. All acquiesce in it; none attack it. The Otoes are worse. Out of about fifty families ten polygamous ones were named as well known, with the admission that there was probably several others. Probably one-third of all the married men in the tribe have more than one wife.

The interpreter, a fat, lazy hulk, sat in the agency store taking his ease while his wives drew several barrels of water from the well to haul home. He then got in the wagon and one of his wives drove the team. Their marriages rest upon agreement, are usually made up by friends, and the young couple have less to say concerning it than any others of the tribe. Friends of the groom propose to the friends of the bride. The question of price then comes in, Ponies, calico, etc., are given by his friend to hers. If an uncle, cousin, or other near relative oppose the match it is delayed or broken off.

Usually a few extra presents softens the objections. A feast follows. Separations have not been common in times past, but two cases have occurred in six weeks in which the husband has abandoned his wife and children and married another woman. Unless the tribal council breaks up these practices the government will then be compelled to take action.

REVOLTING BURIAL CEREMONY.

The body was placed in the grave in a sitting position, the mouth of the grave covered over with logs, dirt piled on these, and a horse killed on the top of this. The horse must be the best that can be procured, and it is choked to death on the grave. If the dead man had one or more relapses prolonging his sickness, the horse must be tortured in a similar slow manner. All friends of the family are expected to make presents of calico and other articles.

An Otee scandal of the first water has just occurred. A school girl was recently married to a man much older than herself against her wishes. She soon after ran away with her former youthful lover. The deserted husband was irate and about to follow on the war-path. A council was called, and many of the friends of the runaway couple sat up with him all night attempting to allay his anger. One of them gave him his finest moccasins and leggings, another a brooch, and others still other presents, till he said "his heart felt better; his heart was not so bad as it had been," and he finally said "his heart was all right now," and they might come back. "She was dead." This Otee custom might be a sensible one in some white communities.

Missiles Thrown at Judges.

Any stick, says the proverb, will serve to beat a dog; and it appears to be the opinion of some persons that any missile will do to hurl at a judge. None can have forgotten the egg which Vice Chancellor Malins happily avoided, and which he supposed "must have been meant for his brother Bacon;" and now one Mary Cawley (thirty-three times convicted) has been throwing a clog at the Accrington bench of magistrates, whereby the chairman was struck on the breast. The most notable story of the kind in our judicial annals is thus given by L'Estrange:—"Judge Richardson, in going the Western circuit, had a great flint stone thrown at his head by a malefactor, then condemned (who thought it meritorious, and the way to be a benefactor to the commonwealth, to take away the life of a man so odious); but leaning low on his elbow, in a lazy, reckless manner, the bullet flew too high and only took off his hat. Soon after some friends congratulating his deliverance, he replied by way of jest:

"You see, now, if I had been an upright judge (intimating his reclining posture), 'I would have been slain.' The remaining facts of the case are given in Chief Justice Treby's "Notes to Dyer's Reports," in the remarkable jargon of the law reports of the period:—"Richardson, Ch. Just. de C. Banc. al Assizes at Salisbury, in summer 1631, fuit assaut per prisoner la condamne pur felony; que puis son condemnation ject un brickbat a le dit justice, qui narrowly mist; et pur ces immediately fuit indictment drawn, per Noy, envers le prisoner, et son dexter manus ampute, and fixat gibbet, sur que luy meme immediate hange in presence de court." Noy, was of course, the Attorney-General. Pepys had heard that Richardson really wanted to save the prisoner's life, and was consulting as to whether he could not sentence him to transportation, when the wretched man thus decided his own fate.

Eleven thousand dollars worth of ink was used by the post office department last year in stamping and cancelling letters. An economically-disposed person thinks that if the government would permit cancelled stamps to be re-issued, much of this expense might be saved. Sure enough; but the government never did go very strong on economy.

SEAL HUNTING.

Wholesale Slaughter on the Coast of Labrador—A Favorable Season.

The sealing season has had a far more favorable opening this year than in many seasons before, writes a correspondent from St. Johns, New Foundland. The sealing season commences about the 1st of March and ends about the last of May, during which time several of the sealers make two voyages, and on rare occasions three. The owners of all sealing vessels furnish all the boats, sealing gear, powder, shot, and provisions, in consideration of which they are entitled to one-half the seals, and the crew or hunters are entitled to the other half. The masters of the vessels receive a percentage of the owner's share as a salary. Four different kinds of seals are caught on the coasts of Labrador and Greenland—the harp, the square flipper, the hood, and the native seal. The square flipper is the largest, and the native is the smallest of the seals caught. But the meat of the young native seal is used as food, and is relished, being as pleasant to the taste as any salt-water bird. Its length is from three to five feet, and it is more easily domesticated than any other species of the seal. It frequents quiet bays in the coast of Greenland. The hood seal is so named from a hood covering over the head, capable of being distended and elevated or depressed at pleasure. It is the most difficult to kill, because it inflates the hood, which is so thick that a club or bullet will not penetrate it, but if struck in the throat it invariably, though reluctantly, submits.

The hood seal is most eagerly sought after. They have their young early in March, and whole families are found on the ice and easily killed. The harp seal receives its name from a large black, crescent-shaped mark on each side of the back. It ranges from six to eight, and sometimes nine, feet in length. Seal hunting requires great patience and skill. One seal seems to be always placed on watch where danger is to be apprehended from bears and hunters. They climb up through the holes in the ice, and will remain for hours, if not disturbed. They will scent a hunter at a great distance, especially if the hunter is to the windward of them, and no sooner does the scent become perceptible to the seal than he dashes off into the water. The food of the seal is salmon, whitefish, and codfish. It is believed that the hunters must keep up a sharp war on the seals in the vicinity of Newfoundland and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, in order that codfishermen may have larger catches. The hunters believe that the number of seals is increasing in the west of Newfoundland, and the seal-fishing has become one of vital importance; but this alone would not support the colony. The seal's search for salmon is so eager that it has been known to hunt the neighborhood of the salmon-nets for a long time, and to take the fish after they had been entrapped.

Contrary to the opinion of many, the fur seal is never found on this coast, but there is considerable difference in the species of the common seal. The latter is generally found in small herds. Its skin and oil are of considerable mercantile importance. The skin is dressed and tanned and used as leather. The oil, if made before decay has begun, is colorless and nearly inodorous, and it is much superior to whale oil for many purposes. The flesh is used for food in Greenland and Labrador. By the eagerness of the hunter, he generally loses in the hunt 10 per cent. of those he kills, as he frequently kills and piles on the ice, at a great distance from the vessel, a lot of seals. In such a case, in transporting the skins to the vessel they frequently become frost-bitten, which makes them worthless, or they are capsized from the ice in a gale. After the seal is shot, or caught, the skinner removes the fat. An expert will remove the fat from five hundred seals in ten hours, being careful not to injure the skin, as every hole he cuts in it deducts

10 cents from his pay. About 3,000 pounds of seal fat will produce 250 gallons of oil. The herring and codfish fisheries, together with the seal-hunting, if carried on with proper care and treatment, would be the means of giving lucrative employment to many more of our people, and enable them to provide the necessities of life, of which many of them are now destitute.

Bitten by a Cobra.

Among many instances of snake-bite poisoning I have seen was a strong young Brahmin of 20, well-known to me, who had been bitten during the night while watching his maize crop. Ere I knew of it they had brought him into my compound in front of the bungalow. As yet yet he walked quite steadily, only leaning slightly on the arm of another man. There was that peculiar drowsy look in his eyes, however, as from a strong narcotic, which indicated his having been bitten for some time, and left but little room for hope now. He could still clearly tell me particulars. He had been bitten, he said, on putting his foot to the ground while moving off his charpoy in the dark, but, thinking the bite was that of a non-poisonous snake, had given no more heed to the matter, and gone to sleep again, till he was awake by his friends coming in search of him. With some difficulty I was able to find the bite—very faint, no larger than the prick from a pin, but still the unmistakable double mark of the poison-fangs. He felt the poison, he said, gradually ascending the limb, and pointed to a part just above the knee, where he felt it had already reached, the limb below that being, he said, benumbed, and painless to the touch, like the foot when "asleep." I gave him the usual remedies, and kept him walking to and fro, but gradually his limbs seemed to be losing their power of voluntary motion, and his head was beginning to droop from the overpowering drowsiness that was surely gathering over him. At intervals he pointed out the poison line steadily rising higher, and was still able to answer questions clearly on being roused. At length it seemed to be of no use torturing him further by keeping him moving about, and he was allowed to remain at rest. Shortly afterwards, while being supported in a sitting posture, all at once, without any premonitory sign, he gave one or two long sighs, and life ceased, about an hour after he had himself walked into the compound. There was something terribly real in this faculty of pointing out each stage of the ascending poison (as the snake-bitten patient always can) that was gradually bringing him nearer and nearer to death, with the prospect of only another hour or half-hour of life remaining to him; and yet the patient does not seem to realize this with the keenness that an onlooker does, probably from the poison benumbing at the same time the powers of the mind as well as of the body.

Japanese Superstitions

Japanese people are very superstitious, and have innumerable signs and tokens by which to regulate their conduct. They never sweep the rooms of a house immediately after one of the inmates has set out upon a journey, as this would sweep out all the luck with him. At a marriage ceremony neither bride nor bridegroom wears any clothing of a purple color, lest their marriage tie be soon loosed, as purple is the color most liable to fade. They have some curious ideas in regard to the finger nails, which are cut only at certain times. If a woman steps over an egg-shell, she will go mad; if over a razor, it will become dull; if over a whetstone, it will be broken. If a man should set his hair on fire, he will go mad. The Japanese have numberless other superstitions of a similar character.

If you would not fall into sin, do not sit by the door of temptation.