

ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT

EUROPEAN ORNAMENTS.

The European Jack Tar, who sails in ships visiting foreign and far-away ports, is strongly disposed to do a little trading on his own account. This is especially true when his voyages bring him into contact with peoples who are savage, or semi-savage, and who possess material of various kinds which he regards as curiosities, and which are again disposable when he arrives at home. It is to such sailors, probably quite as much as to regular traders and trading companies, that nic-nacks and gew-gaws find their way among simple-minded communities.

It is even said that in former days, when voyages of this kind were much more frequent than they are now, or can ever be again, that when Jack signed papers for his ship there was a special clause in the agreement permitting him to engage in petty traffic of this kind to a limited extent. In this way numerous trinkets were easily and speedily introduced among the natives of any country to whom glass and metallic articles were novelties, and thus it seems credible that many objects of European make might become widely spread throughout any country, passing from hand to hand by way of barter among the natives long before any attempt was made at settlement by the new arrivals, or even long before the natives of places remote from a port of call had ever seen a white man. It is not, therefore, safe to conclude that there was always actual or personal European contact with our own aborigines, simply because we meet with evidences of European presence somewhere on the continent, perhaps a thousand miles distant from any coast. But whatever may have been done by means of individual effort, the regularly chartered trading companies accomplished infinitely more in this way. For a few barrels of glass beads, of fish hooks, of pocket knives, of brass buttons, earrings and the like, costing tens or even hundreds of dollars, the returns in furs would amount to as many thousands, or hundreds of thousands, and as the Indian travelled immense distances to reach trading-posts we may readily understand why the white man's workmanship must have frequently long preceded the white man himself.

On the authority of Miss Tah ne-mah-ge-wah-nok (Going down stream) a highly intelligent Ojibwa, the statement is here made that Indians as a matter of taste prefer silver to gold. This statement was volunteered one day not long ago when the lady was examining a case of silver trade-ornaments in the museum. These have been collected, mostly through purchase, from a few Iroquois and others. The objects in question almost invariably take the forms of brooches, bracelets, finger and earrings, crosses, hatbands and a few medals. The brooches, bracelets, and hatbands were mostly made from metal in thin sheet form, and quite springy as a result of having been rolled cold in the manufacture. All the patterns on these articles are the result not of casting, but of cutting and embossing, as the nature of the material demanded, and in this way they were produced very cheaply. As a matter of course the medals were made by means of dies and these decorations were given by the government and presented or sold by wealthy trading companies to distinguished Indians, or to others whose favor it was desirable to win for commercial purposes.