

An Indian Boat Race.

On the 24th of May the annual regatta takes place in Victoria, on the beautiful arm, which is a quarter of a mile wide and stretches for upwards of two miles before it reaches the Gorge, and is one of the most perfect spots imaginable for boat races.

The most popular race is that of the Indian war canoes, and it is this that most of the spectators come to see.

Anxious squaws, accompanied by their husbands and children, through the dry goods stores for about a week before the regatta. All the Island tribes are there and subdued excitement prevails while gay colored silken kerchiefs are being purchased wherewith to adorn their respective crews.

Now the day has come, and the ten canoes are lined up ready for the start, just under the Gorge bridge. The various colored flags at the bows, the bright kerchiefs at head and waist of the men, the sun glistening on the lifted paddles, the strong backs bent for the first effort, create an impression not easily forgotten.

Crack! and the spectators lean forward with intense excitement. Crack! again, and with one wild cry the canoes leap out, paddles dipping, flashing and dipping again, and the race has begun.

The Cowichan Indians are ahead, the red flag keeps gallantly to the fore, the black canoe, lithe and supple in the rushing water, speeds on like an arrow from the bow.

Huh! huh! And the brown arms quicken the pace, silken handkerchiefs loosen and flutter from heated brows.

Past boat house and landing they go, past launches, small boats and tugs, with the shouts of thousands ringing in their ears. Half-way!

The man-o'-war launch keeps persistently at their heels, and toots its whistle "to clear the track." Now comes the first hard struggle for the inside place to circle round the island at the end of the arm.

The black flag with the white moon is fast gaining on the Cowichan canoe.

Around the bend, and now with the tide against them, with the thought of that coveted gold piece before them, and for the honor of the tribe, fatigue is shaken off, backs are braced and they nerve themselves for the last mile and a half.

"Huh! Huh!" The coxswain's eager hand stretches out, setting the pace yet faster; keeping a steady grip on the paddle by which the canoe is steered. The canoes lift as if alive and leap forward.