

AN INDIAN TRADITION OF THE LAKE OF THE WOODS.

A GREAT many years ago, before the white man had entered the region to which this story refers, and the fatal effects of civilization and fire water had left their impress on the native savage, there dwelt by the shores of the Lake of the Woods, where now stands the town of Keewatin, a branch of the Otchipwe or Sota tribe of Indians, who possessed in a great degree all the best qualities of the native character. They were noted for their skill in hunting and their bravery in war, and not less for the beauty of their women. This last title to distinction was a source of danger to the tribe, as they were subjected on that account to constant raids from their hereditary enemies, the Sioux of the prairies, whom they had hitherto been able to successfully repel.

Though not numerically strong (the total number of the tribe not exceeding 2,000), owing to their being entirely dependent for their subsistence on fishing and the chase, which they pursued from year's end to year's end, they were superior in physique to the Indians of the plains and could hold their own against greater numbers.

The chief of the tribe, who was also the medicine man, was in great repute for his sagacity, which had often been proved when raided by the Sioux, and he was supposed to have very close intercourse with the Mino-manito or good spirit. He was called Wabadjidjak (the White Crane), and was possessed of a daughter, the fairest of the tribe, whose beauty was well-known and as far famed as were her father's powers as a medicine man. Omemee (the pigeon) was sought in marriage by many a young brave, but had not shown an open preference, although she had secretly declared in favour of Maingan (the wolf), an untried young brave, but of great fame as a hunter; and Wabadjidjak, who was aware of her preference, would have sanctioned her choice had he not feared to offend some of the more powerful braves who sought her, and thus weaken his own power in the tribe.

As he was aware that he would ere long be called on for a decision, after pondering the matter for a time, he announced that a meeting of the braves would be held and that he had an important communication to make to them. Great was the excitement in the wigwams, and numberless the conjectures in regard to the course likely to be taken by the chief in the disposal of his daughter's hand, for it was generally understood that the braves were called together to be informed of his intentions in regard to her.

The pow-wow was held, and after the preliminary beating of tom-toms, etc., was over, the chief addressed the assembled braves with a savage eloquence which had always a wonderful effect upon the tribe.

He began by giving the history of the tribe since he had obtained the leadership, how they had been successful in war and in the chase, how they had prospered in all things and lived in peace with each other.

Then he spoke of his daughter Omemee, of her beauty and good qualities, and how happy she would make the wigwam of her chosen brave.

Then turning to the young braves, her suitors, he appealed to them to prove themselves worthy of her by showing their devotion to the tribe and by keeping in check their jealous hatred of each other, and demanded of them that they should take an oath that which ever of them was fortunate enough to secure the hand of Omemee should not be molested by his less fortunate rivals.

This being complied with, he announced to the tribe that he had been instructed by the Manito that they should take the war-path against their enemies the Sioux, that they should be successful, returning with many scalps, and to the brave who had the greatest number at his belt would he give his daughter Omemee.

This met with the general approval of the braves, who had long been anxious for an opportunity of distinguishing themselves on the war-path against their hereditary foes; and the following night they held the war-dance, at which the young untried braves gave signal proofs of their courage and fortitude.

The only one in the village who did not look with rejoicing on the preparations for war with the Sioux was the beautiful Omemee. She trembled for her lover, and for herself should he be slain or fail to be successful; and she inwardly resolved to destroy herself, rather than go to the wigwam of any other than Maingan.

The day arrived for the departure of the war party, and five hundred warriors embarked in their canoes on their mission to the distant prairies, the home of the savage Sioux.

Maingan and Omemee had taken their secret farewells, and the young brave had managed to instil some of his hope and confidence into the heart of the maiden, so that she longed for his speedy return and the consummation of their nuptials.

Every day she wandered by the lake shore and petitioned the Manito and the spirit of the lake (which was the special divinity of the tribe) for the safe return of her father and Maingan.

Meantime the warriors had reached the western end of the Lake of the Woods, and having cached their canoes, started on their journey towards the setting sun.

Two days they journeyed, and had halted for the night about half way between the Lake of the Woods and the edge of the great prairies.

It was after their evening meal, and Maingan and the Wabadjidjak were seated together talking in low tones, while they smoked their calumets made of clay with stems of reeds, and filled with the fragrant bark of the red willow.

Maingan, since he had left the presence of his beloved Omemee, had been filled with strange forebodings, and was now relating to his (as he fondly hoped) prospective father-in-law a dream which he had had the night before, which troubled him greatly, in which the spirit of the lake, in the shape of a wild swan, had appeared to him and told him that he should take many scalps, but that he should go to the happy hunting grounds a solitary spirit, leaving behind no squaws or children, and that many more moons should not pass over his head.

"My son," said the White Crane, "although all dreams come not from the Manito, still he speaks in that way to his children of the forest and stream, and your dream of last night perchance contains a warning which we ought not to disregard."

Maingan's dream made such an impression on the chief that he resolved for his sake to postpone the expedition, and the following morning called his braves together, and, without mentioning the dream to them, informed them that the Manito had talked to him during the night in the guise of the south wind, and had whispered in his ear that the present would be an inauspicious time to make a descent on the Sioux lodges; that they should return and wait for the moon that ripens the corn, and that they should then be able to take many more scalps than if they continued their expedition at the present time.

There were some murmurs of dissent among the braves at this decision, but the White Crane was in such repute among them as a medicine man, besides being their chief, that they agreed to postpone their expedition and return, although the prospect of facing the jeers of the squaws on account of their faintheartedness was far from pleasing to them.

They travelled rapidly on their journey homeward, and towards the close of the following day reached the spot on the shores of the Lake of the Woods where they had hidden their canoes.

To their utter dismay they found they had been removed, and an examination proved that a large war party of the Sioux, which must have passed them in proximity, had been fortunate enough to discover their canoes, and were, no doubt, by this time, within a short distance of their village. In hot haste they made new canoes from the birch bark, of which a plentiful supply was at hand, and started again on their journey, their hearts filled with agonizing fears as to the fate of their squaws and the old people and children left in their wigwams.

On the second day of their departure, while at a part of the lake called the Narrows, where, for a distance, the banks approach each other closely, they heard before them the exultant war songs of the returning Sioux. To hurriedly disembark and hide their canoes was but the work of a few moments, and in breathless silence they waited the approach of their savage foes, who came triumphantly on without thought of danger.

A storm of well-directed arrows made the latter at once to realize the situation, and they made strenuous but fruitless efforts to escape. The Otchipwes followed along the banks and discharged their arrows at such close quarters with deadly effect. Some of the canoes sank, and those who attempted to get a footing on shore were at once overpowered by force of numbers. Of the whole band, equal to, if not more numerous than the Otchipwes, only a few warriors escaped to the woods. These were at once followed, but they managed to distance their pursuers; and a part of the lake across which they swam is still known as the Sioux Crossing.

Among the Otchipwes the most active and foremost in the attack was Maingan, and when, towards the close of the day, the braves gathered together and the scalps torn from the enemy were counted his share was the greatest, and the White Crane acknowledged him as the chosen husband of his daughter Omemee, if, alas, she were still alive; for those of the savage Sioux whom they had taken captive and reserved for torture, exultantly boasted of having taken every scalp from their wigwams, and the fact that not a single prisoner had been seen among them seemed to confirm the statement.

Sadly and silently the Otchipwes paddled through the night, and shortly after daybreak arrived within sight of what had once been their happy village, but now a scene of desolation and death. Not a sound reached their ear. The Sioux had well done their bloody work, and left not a soul to tell the tale. Slowly they turned the bows of their canoes to the shore, when suddenly a cry burst from the lips of Maingan, and all eyes are turned toward an object, on which, erect in the canoe, he fixed his intent gaze.

Seated on a rock about one hundred yards out in the stream sits Omemee, her brow wound with a wreath of wild flowers, facing the west, the point from which the canoe of her lover would be first seen returning. A sudden hope leaps into Maingan's breast. Omemee has escaped, and after the departure of the foe has gone out to the rock to catch the first glimpse of the returning braves. But where is her canoe? And why is she so still? No doubt asleep, wearied with watching, and canoe half drifted away. They paddle quickly to the rock. There lies the body of the Indian maiden, but no soul looks out of those wide open eyes. The Sioux, with a fiendish humour, had placed the dead girl in a life-like position, wound the flowers in her hair, and thus left her to welcome the returning canoes. Lifting the body tenderly into their canoe the father and lover paddled to their desolate wigwams.

On the following day Maingan had disappeared, and with him the dead Omemee; and as no trace of him could be found he had, no doubt, hastened to fulfil the prediction of the Spirit of the Lake.

The bereft tribe, after burying and mourning for their dead, left their hunting grounds, and traversing eastward mixed with others of their race on the shores of Lake Superior.

PARIS LETTER.

THE age has grown picked; the heavens no more blazed forth on the political death of Prince Bismarck than do comets appear when beggars die. Even the Public Funds did not display a drop. Yet a few years ago the retirement of the Chancellor from the post of Continental Medicine-man would have created consternation. Germany is already reconciled to the change, and France accepts it with resigned astonishment, but without any fear. Austria and Italy feel satisfied that the triple alliance will suffer nothing in its "potentialities." England got over the loss of Walpole, Austria of Metternich, and France of Richelieu and his successor, Mazarin. Why not Germany reconcile herself to the eclipse of Bismarck?

A new world has come to the front since the battles of the Titans in 1870-71; on that world the ex-Chancellor had but a feeble grip, and he was never in touch with it. A statesman, rather than a diplomatist, was what Germany needed after her unity was welded by blood and iron. And when the Federal Parliament, as the recent Reichstag elections show, no longer possessed the elements of a ruling coalition, Bismarck's occupation was gone. But William II., whose governing aptitudes and Frederick-the-Great obstinate boldness Bismarck had failed to gauge, understood his epoch—that of marching with modern wants, so long as the path does not lead to the compromising of the divine mission of his dynasty. This will explain why the Germans, while not forgetting Bismarck's splendid services, have confidence in the personalism and grit of their emperor. Nothing is so repulsive to irrepressible children than to be kept in the go-cart when they are strong enough to walk alone. William II. has belied the expectation of turning out a Jingo sovereign, and he now aims to take the wind out of the sails of Social Democracy without either "cudgelling or cajoling" it. Such is the French view of Germany—without Bismarck.

The proposed *prolétair* demonstration in Paris on next May Day, down the Champs Elysées, commences to be viewed with apprehension. How far the idea will be followed in other capitals remains to be seen. The Government is determined to prohibit the procession, and to warn off all foreign delegates. The masses claim to have only pacific ends in view—the presentation of a petition, with all solemnity and backed by the evidence of numbers. The petition itself is to pray for the abolition of the terrible armaments which derange labour, devour taxes, and consume life; the right of association for workmen, and the application of a sliding scale to wages, by which the latter, starting from an initial rate, based on mutual justice, will rise or fall, as prices scale up or down. Perhaps the unexpressed end of the movement is to bring about a federation of all the industries in a nation, and next the federation of the *prolétaires* in all lands. It is no use shutting eyes to the fact that Socialism is progressing by leaps and bounds, and must henceforth be counted with.

French artistes resort to so many eccentric ways of "posing," that one more example would not be astonishing. To discover the whereabouts of the composer, M. Saint-Saëns, piques public curiosity more than the much to-be-desired arrest of Eyraud, the murderer. M. Saint-Saëns has brought out two new operas recently "Samson et Dalila," and "Ascanio." The composer did not appear before the footlights to receive the customary homage from the spectators. Oriental monarchs liked to disguise themselves and mixing among their subjects learn unsugared comments on their government. Saint-Saëns might have been secretly in the body of the house, as he formerly was during the first representation of his "Phaëton." La Bruyère observes the wise avoid sometimes society, fearing to be wearied. The librettist, M. Gallet, the director of the Lariboisière hospital, was the last person who saw M. Saint-Saëns, who left for Cadiz five months ago, under an assumed name, intending to winter at Teneriffe. Since then, the silence of the tomb.

Rumour places the absent in Algeria, Java, Oceania, a lunatic asylum, and even in Paris itself. He is 55 years of age; his private life has been unhappy; some years ago he lost his mother to whom he was passionately attached; he is separated from his wife and two children, and he lived alone. He was not a society man; he had a few friends to whom he appeared periodically in alternate accessions of gaiety and melancholy. He owned the island of Caprera, which the Italian government purchased from him for four millions of francs, to present it as a residence to Garibaldi. Saint-Saëns has dissipated more than the half of that sum. This explains why his sixth cousin, an old maid, demands to be appointed administrator of his estate—till he be found. No less than forty-nine other cousins have lodged claims for slices of the property. They do not seek the relative; they are uneasy only about his fortune.

At twelve years of age, Saint-Saëns was famous; he was a celebrity at twenty. Litz predicted a glorious future for him; he was an accomplished organist and pianist, and no mean caricaturist. Bach and Beethoven he knew profoundly; from being an admirer, he became the enemy of Wagner. Berlioz, who, too, was periodically lost to sight, when over-worked complained that he suffered from "a superabundance of sensibility; from the ebullition and the evaporation of the heart, the sense, and the brain." Composers have had ever their peculiarities; thus Glück, to