

In the same way, a man who feels injured by another will destroy a certain amount of property, then his adversary is compelled to do the same, else a stain of dishonor will rest upon him until he destroys the same amount of property — or, if he refuses to do so, all his lifetime. I have heard of a case in which a man fancied another man had in some way or other injured him ; so in order, as he thought, to punish his adversary, he destroyed all the property he could spare. His adversary quickly responded by destroying double the amount, which the other was unable to do, and so the whole village laughed at him.

All of these patlatches, except the first mentioned, have, as far as I know, long been discontinued. That one is still held by sufferance. Several years ago all patlatches were, by act of Parliament, declared illegal, and all who held them were liable to fine and imprisonment. This has been done lately on the Nords, where a chief held a patlatch and where, just now, the Indians threaten to set the law at defiance and hold them. A deputation has been sent by the northern aborigines to Victoria, seeking redress and a refunding of the money unjustly taken from them by an obnoxious law. It has been to the interest of several parties to have these patlatches abolished, and false representations have been made to the Indian Department.

Patlatches are time-honored festivals of our aborigines, and probably existed before the adoption of Christianity.

What right have we Canadians to try and stop those poor people having a reunion occasionally ? If the Indians were the ruling power, and said to us you must stop your feasts and holidays or we will imprison you and enact heavy fines, how would we like it ? Methinks I hear you all say "Not at all — we have a right to all feasts and holidays as long as we behave ourselves." The aborigines, on the same condition, have the same rights. Parties writing from the north against their continuance, say they knew several people who lost their lives by attending patlatches, by being left alone in the woods. If any did so, they must have been Humatsa, under training, and not at all connected with patlatches.

In conclusion, let me say a patlatch is simply this : A party has a little wealth which he wishes to dispose of to advantage, by not only doubling it, but by getting a new and better name, as well as a higher social standing. He invites his friends. When they come he gives all he has to all who choose to accept it, with the understanding, by both giver and receiver, that all has to be returned double as soon as possible.

If any one who had got some of the property given away, died, those who inherited his name and property had to return all according to agreement, or rather social usages of these people.