

## IX.—SIGN LANGUAGE.

Gesticulation was thought by the Thompson Indians to be indispensable to good speaking or story-telling. Some people, while narrating an incident, accompanied their words with descriptive signs. Many of these gestures were also used as signs between persons a distance apart, or when it was inadvisable to speak or make a noise for fear of disturbing or frightening game. Signs of this kind, therefore, were often made use of by hunters and warriors. Following are some of them :—

1. *Bear*. — Both fists held in front of breast, knuckles upward, the thumbs touching the bent forefingers ; fists pushed forward alternately in circular motions, imitating the movements of a bear.

2. *Deer*. — Hands held up on both sides of head, at height of ears ; palms forward, open.

3. *Doe*. — The first and second fingers of each hand held up above each ear.

4. *Bush*. — Open hands placed against each other so that both thumbs and both little fingers touch.

5. *Very dense ; dense bushes*. — Fingers of both hands interlocked, so that finger-tips of one hand are between the fingers of the other hand.

6. *Lake*. — Hands held close together before breast, fingers describing a wide circle forward and back to breast.

7. *Old man*. — Forefinger of right hand held up, slightly bent, the other fingers closed, indicating the bent back.

8. *Rider*. — First and second fingers of right hand straddling the first and second of the left, which is held with thumb and third and little fingers closed ; first and second extended horizontally, parallel to breast, touching each other.

9. *Trap*. — Both palms clapped together.

10. *Spoon or cup*. — All the fingers of the right hand slightly bent and placed close together, back of hand down, palm forming a slight hollow, thumb resting in centre of palm.

11. *Drinking*. — Drawing the right hand, in the position of No. 10, up towards the mouth.

12. *Noon*. — Right hand closed excepting forefinger, which is extended and held up in front of face.

13. *Sunrise*. — Right hand half opened, forefinger extended slightly upward, palm towards body, then moved upward.

14. *Sunset*. — Forefinger pointing downward in front of breast and moved downward.

15. *Buck sighted*. — Both hands placed close above the head, with the fingers spread out, and moved two or three times up and down above the head.

16. *Buck trotting*. — Both hands closed except the forefinger, and one hand moved rapidly in front of the other.