



Three Citizens of To-morrow, Children of the Oneidas of Yesterday.



Abraham Johns, at 78 Years of Age, is Still Industrious.

The Indians of Yesterday

A Simple Study of Abraham Johns and His Oneida People

By JANE STUART

A FEW years ago it was common in the Alberta foothills to encounter bands of Indians who looked like the Indians of the moving picture show, though they lacked the keen desire of the latter worthies to slay and scalp. They hadn't gone on the warpath since "the rebellion," in 1885, and they had a profound reverence for the members of the North-West Mounted Police. As they went along the trail, the travois dragging behind their cayuses, rabbit skins braided in their coarse, black hair, blankets wrapped around them, their moccasins thickly embroidered with brightly-coloured porcupine quills and beads, they would have satisfied the most exacting searchers for the picturesque.

If evening found them away from home they would pitch their tepees by a stream. The squaws would scurry around unpacking or looking for brushwood for the fire—perhaps in the haste a blanket would be thrown aside, and a vivid red or pink print dress displayed to view. Meanwhile the braves would leisurely betake themselves to the creek for their stomachs' sakes. They would soon find a spot where the water was deep and still, and, of course, clear as crystal, so that the trout or grayling could be plainly seen. Part of the catch would be turned over to the feminine portion of the band for the supper. The remainder would be taken to the nearest ranch house to be "swopped" for some addition to the menu—potatoes, bread or milk, perhaps.

Knowing what the western Blackfoot or Sarcee or Cree was like a short time ago, you might imagine that it would be easy to find among the Ontario Indians many who could tell of a very different life from the one they are leading now, but most of them do not know much of a wilder existence. As Abraham Powless, who is cultivating the potato patch while his wife hoes the few rows of turnips, will tell you, "Pretty much civilized round here now." "But," you say, "the Indians didn't always live in houses like this (this being a cement brick cottage). What did they live in long ago before they had regular houses?"

"Oh, I dunno, like animile, I guess."

Abraham, however, could tell you of an old man, Abraham Johns, who "lives just like Injun. He so black, he got no hair on his face." Both Abrahams are Oneida Indians, living in South Middlesex. Years ago, the Oneidas lived near Oneida Lake, in New York State. The government sold their land, giving them more in Kansas to take its place. Part of the tribe, however, took matters in their own hands and came to Canada. Johns says he was five years old at the exodus and he is now seventy-eight, so, if he can be relied upon, they have lived in Ontario seventy-three years. As they did not take possession of their Kansas land they were paid for it—about six years ago. Every individual who claimed the proper lineage got something over \$100, so there was great joy in "Neidertown" while the money lasted. They rested from their labours and bought horses and buggies, got new clothes, and painted their front doors (bright blue or yellow) till they had to bring their minds back again to flax-pulling or berry picking, corn husking or wood-chopping, farming on a small scale or hiring out by the day. The farmer who lives on the border of the reserve would doubtless add chicken thieving to this list of occupations, and exclaim:

"Doggone them, I wish the whole tribe were out of there. Just the night before last I left my granary door unlocked and I'll be cow-kicked if some blamed Injun didn't come along and steal a bag of seed wheat."

The Oneidas had plenty of money when they came to Canada, and it is said that Colonel Mahlon Burwell, one of the pioneers of Middlesex, used to cross the Thames to the reserve to sell them cucumber pickles, as they were the only people around who had actual cash, and they were quite willing to part with it for the these sour dainties. They are still fond of pickles, and a frequent order in the little general stores is "Want peekles."

Old Abraham Johns now lives in a frame house, but he points across the fields to the log house he used to live in with "my first woman, not her," and he tells of the shanties they first built of basswood bark. You ask if his grandfather lived in a bark shanty:

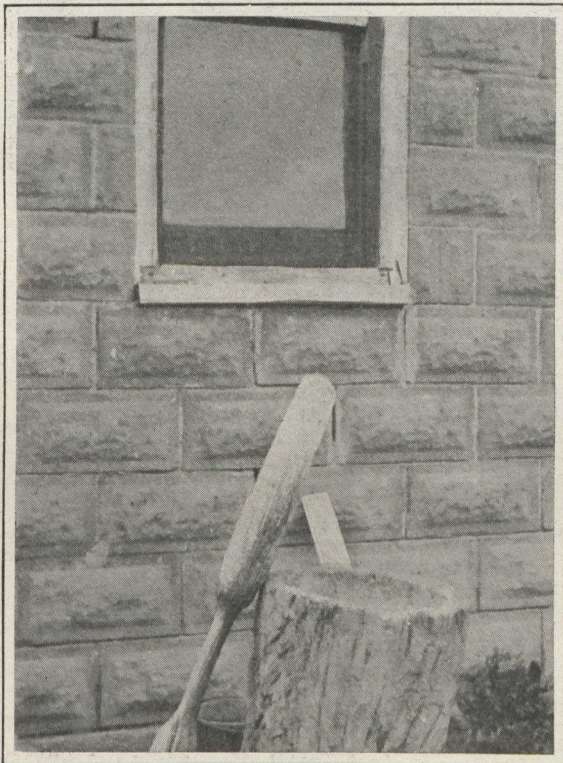
"Haven't any grandfather."

"But you used to have one."

"Oh, I 'spose so—when I little fellow."

He points with pride to little Abraham, his grandson, who goes to the new brick school and is imbibing much wisdom from the white teacher. "I give him my name," he says. "He Abraham Johns, too."

Like the other old-timers, he tells of the numerous deer that used to be in the woods. These, he says, he always shot with a gun. "Shoot squirrel with bow and arrow," he says in response to an enquiry about the use of arrows. "Shoot lots of turkey, too."



The Old-style Flour Mill of the Oneida Indians, a Hollow Block and a Club, in Its Modern Surroundings.

That's why they call it Turkey Creek—that creek over there." If you ask any of the old men about bears, every one will tell you that they have seen one—seldom more. Abraham has the added glory of shooting his bear somewhere down toward Southwold Station.

"Did you eat it?"

"Ye-e-s," long drawn out in surprise at the

absurdity of the question.

You ask if it was better than venison.

"Ye-e-s. Good. Fat," is the reply.

One is inclined to be somewhat doubtful of Abraham's taste in culinary matters, however, for he gives great praise to the corn bread of his people. In the kitchen is a hollow oak stump and a pounder, which are the only class of relics left on the reserve, costumes, jewelry, etc., having been bought up long ago. Most of the Indians, including the John, use this heirloom to grind corn for the chickens, but Abraham tells with great gusto how they used to mix the pounded cornmeal with water and beans and cook it in a pot. His "Ye-e-s, good," sounds very convincing, but if you have seen the concoction at a feast or Indian fair you have no craving for it.

In the old man's house are two rooms, one a kitchen, while the other might be termed a bed-sitting-room, for it contains three beds and also such "parlour furniture" as they boast of. In a large gilt frame are the family portraits sewed together into one imposing rectangle. Abraham points out "my girl" and "my baby boy" (a young man about twenty), also another woman who lives in the house. "That girl. You been here. You know her." You ask if you might take a picture of him. "You send one?" he anxiously demands again and again during the preparations. Glancing through the doorway while you select the spot where you want him to sit, you behold him standing meekly while his "woman" draws a comb relentlessly through his long, tangled hair. Then he struggles into his best coat and is ready. You do not check these signs of vanity, but you do insist on his wife keeping her pipe in sight. The camera clicks and then the old Indian says, "Maybe you might forget to send one?"

Next to the Johns lives Sarah Doxtater, she who suffered many a beating as the wife of Dan Kick, until "Dan, he died, and she got George Doxtater for her man." Sarah had directed you to the other place, so you stop to say that you found Abraham and that he told you many things.

"Oh! That's a good thing. That's a good thing—he tell you lots of things," she says, and with her bare feet planted on a cool piece of grass she watches you drive away.

Inside Stories

By NORMAN PATTERSON

SIR WILLIAM RALPH MEREDITH, once the leader of the Conservative Opposition in the Ontario Legislature, now chief justice of the Province and chancellor of the University of Toronto, has been a leading figure in recent public matters. His friendship with Sir James Whitney, who was his successor in the leadership of the Ontario Conservatives, is an outstanding feature in the life of each man. Nor was it the attraction of opposites which brought them together. They are much alike in their sturdy uprightness and their equally sturdy frankness. Indeed, their enemies have said they each possessed the same sublime egotism. Perhaps the charge is largely true, but in both the egotism was saved from severe censure in being used for the public good rather than private aggrandizement.

Sir William Meredith has, however, come to an impasse in his public career. He has been chairman of the committee to revise the statistics of Ontario, a job which is to be performed every ten years. The revision was due in 1907, but the volumes are not yet ready. Sir William has done so much revising that he has practically rewritten the whole provincial law. He has made, it is alleged, more radical changes on his own authority in the seven or eight years he has been at the work than the Legislature did in the same period. When these revised statutes appear, the lawyers of the province will be forced to learn their professions anew and all sorts of companies will need to pass new by-laws to meet the new conditions.

But the most peculiar event in the Meredith regime is Sir William's recent report on Workmen's Compensation. This is an official report, ordered from him by his friend, Sir James Whitney. It is most radical. There are those who say it contains the most socialistic recommendations ever promulgated in a British country. Every employer of labour in Ontario is fighting it hard, and when it comes up in the Legislature, in a fortnight or two, the battle will be intense. Last week, the Canadian Lumbermen's Association met at Ottawa, and the secretary declared that "the bill is vicious in its effects" and a glaring example of class legislation.

The Ontario Conservative politician is worried. If the party is forced to throw down the Meredith report then the labour unions, especially the Socialistic members, will howl. If it adopts the Meredith report it will gain the opposition of every large employer in Ontario and perhaps cripple the industrial expansion of the province.

Indeed, there are those who go so far as to say that the Meredith Workmen's Compensation Report will wreck the Conservative party and bring the Liberals into power. Of course, in making this calculation, they figure that Sir James Whitney will never return to the House, and that when he leaves the hospital he will retire into private life.