The Canadian Indian.

The reason for the decimal system being so prevalent all over the world, both among civilized and barbarous people, is doubtless owing to the fact that we human beings are possessors of ten fingers—five on each hand. The common method of counting among the Indians is to turn down the little finger of the left hand for one, the next finger in order for two, the next finger for three, the next for four, and the thumb for five; then the thumb of the right hand for six, and so on until the little finger of the right hand is turned down for ten. In indicating numbers to others, the left hand held up with all the fingers turned down except the little finger would mean one; that and the next finger to it held up would mean two and so on. In counting by tens they will close the fingers of each hand to indicate each ten, or they will hold both hands up with the palms outward and fingers extended for each ten.

Some Indian tribes in counting resort to their toes as well as their fingers, and thus introduce the vigesimal system. The Indians at Guiana, it is said, call five a hand, ten two hands, and twenty a man.

The Dakotas have a peculiar system of their own. When they have gone over the fingers and thumbs of both hands, one finger is temporarily turned down for *one ten*. At the end of the next ten another finger is turned, and so on to a hundred. *Opawinge*, one hundred, is derived from *pawinga*, to go around in circles, to make gyrations.

Indians are not generally good arithmeticians. In their native state they have no idea of making even the simplest mental calculation. To add or subtract they will use sticks, pebbles, or other such objects.

Mr. Schoolcraft, speaking of the Indian mode of counting, says :--"There are separate words used for the digits from one to ten. The nine former are then added after the latter to nineteen. Twenty is denoted by a new term. The digits, from one to nine, are then added to this word till twenty-nine. Thirty is a compound meaning three tens, forty is four tens, and so on to ninety-nine. One hundred is a new term." This, Mr. Schoolcraft says, is the Algonkin method, and a like mode, he says, exists among all the American tribes, with the exception perhaps of the Cherokees, who count as high as one hundred by various numeral names, without repeating the names comprised in the first nine digits.

To illustrate the manner in which various tribes (some of them of different stocks) count from ten upwards, examples are herewith given from the Ojebway, Blackfoot, Micmac, and Dakota languages:

With the Ojebways 10 is madaswi; 11, 12 are madaswi ashi pejig, midaswi ashi nij; 20, 30 are nij-tana, nisimidana; 21 nij tana ashi pejig; 100 ningodwak, 101 ningodwak ashi pejig. With the Blackfeet 10 is kepo; 11, 12 kepo nitsiko'poto, kepo natsikopoto; 20, 30 natsippo, niippo; 100 kepippo. With the Micmacs, 10 is mtŭln; 11, 12 mtŭln tcel na-ukt, mtŭln tcel tabu; 20, 30 are tabu inskääk, nasinskääk; 21 tabu