

Chinamen, acted his part splendidly, and added greatly to the amusement of all by joining in the songs, and giving his own squeaky solos from time to time.

The church thus completed and consecrated is a fine building, eighty feet in length by forty in breadth, the tower and spire rising to about one hundred feet in height. It stands on nearly the same site as the former building which was destroyed by fire in 1893. It is flanked by a vestry on the north west of the chancel, and the entire building has been erected by the Indians themselves under the direction and according to plans prepared by the Archdeacon. The pulpit forms a special feature of the furnishing of the interior. The body is formed by open panel work with double Gothic arches in each, and would not discredit a London manufactory.

WINTER MAILS

For the INTERIOR.

Arrangements have been made by H. B. Co. for two mails to be despatched to the interior during the coming winter.

The first mail will leave Essington on or about 10th December, and should reach Naas Harbour on 15th, where it will be received by couriers and taken via Aiyansh direct to Hazelton.

The second mail is expected to reach Naas Harbour about 10th February.

The couriers on each return trip will bring out mails from the interior and deliver the same at Naas Harbour.

Aiyansh Settlement Scheme.

NOTE. Through the generosity of a friend of practical effort we have been enabled this Fall to (a) assist some of our Indians in cutting, and partly levelling about two miles of waggon road through the reserve, on either side of which we hope soon to see ten-acre locations laid off by government surveyor; and also (b) to place on this road for the use of those taking-up locations, a British Columbia farm truck-wagon with team harness complete. This is the sort of help that helps us onward.

J.B. McC

The Indian Potlatch.

SUBSTANCE OF A PAPER READ BEFORE C.M.S. ANNUAL CONFERENCE, AT METLAKATLA, B.C., 1899,

BY THE REV. J. B. MCCULLAGH.

WHEN this paper was read at our Annual Conference a resolution was passed asking me to have it published. I now, in a way, comply with that request by printing it in the *Interchange* together with other matter tending to throw light upon the subject.

—Ed.

THE Indian Potlatch presents a most difficult problem, not only to solve for the betterment of the race, but even to understand. Indeed no one who has not been born and reared as an Indian among Indians practising it can rightly comprehend what it all means. Though I cannot lay claim to this privilege (!), yet I have had the Potlatch under close observation for sixteen years, and have studied it on the spot both in theory and practice as far as one may do so without actually making one.

But while considering myself thus qualified to speak on the subject, I cannot say that I have completely exhausted it, for there are ramifications connected with it which, I must confess, seem to baffle all effort at investigation.

I think it important, however, to lay before you as much as I know concerning this custom, for it seems to me that upon the thorough eradication of its principles from the Indian mind depends, humanly speaking, the permanency of the results of our work. This I hope to make evident as I proceed.

I would first of all say what the potlatch is not. It is generally described as a custom, but it is not a custom in the ordinary sense of the word, it is much more; we cannot label it as a habit or usage, it is something quite different; it is very far from being a festival, although to the outsider it may appear as such; it is not a religious rite or ceremony, even though there may seem to be a strain of ancestral worship in it; it is neither an amusement nor an entertainment, however much those who practise it may seek to represent it in that light.

Now, if it may not be classed as a custom, practice or habit; if it may not be regarded as a festival, religious rite or ceremony; if it be neither an amusement nor an entertainment, what is it? I reply it is a systematized form of tribal government based upon the universal suffrages of the clans.

Potlatch is not merely the making of a feast where a dance is given and presents made to those attending. If that were all it would be harmless enough, but that is only the outward expression of it. The potlatch is political as far as this life and this world concern the Indian, and the event seen by the public is in reality an election.

The articles distributed with so much display as free gifts (with the exception of blankets and calico torn up into small strips) are all returnable within a year or two. They are not gifts, as many people imagine, but vote-acknowledgements—a public recognition of the rank or social status of the voter (who records his vote by his presence) by the Potlatcher who is a candidate for some position, favour or honour in his clan.

But before proceeding further it is necessary to offer some information as to the constitution of Indian society. You are all aware that it consists of three classes—the nobility, gentry, and common people. These are organized into families (or houses), clan-sections, clans, tribes (communities or villages), and confederacies.