

whole establishment; so every village asked for and obtained from that personage what is now called a chief. As that trading company's officers and, no doubt, some of their employees as well, wore finger-rings, the Carriers thought to raise themselves in the social scale by making for themselves and wearing such previously unknown ornaments; and as copper was rather rare amongst them, they substituted therefor boiled caribou horn, which circumstance accounts for the fact that a ring of such material was lately found here.¹

If potlaching and old-fashioned dancing did not at once fall into desuetude, it was because both were countenanced by the North-West Company and, later on, the Hudson Bay Company people, who, the better to keep the natives under subjection, gave themselves every year a kind of tobacco potlach, in connection wherewith the traditional differences of rank among the receivers were scrupulously observed, and more than once found a welcome recreation in attending the dances and other amusements of the Indians. So that our Carriers were perfectly justifiable if they supposed that both potlach and dance were as much in honour in the country of the whites as the peculiar rank privileges which the latter unconsciously helped to perpetuate.

As the foreign traders had only one wife, the natives, who seemed to have but one ambition—that of raising themselves to the standard of their social superiors—abandoned polygamy even before any minister of religion had set foot among them. So they acted with regard to the cremation of the dead, which, to imitate the whites, they replaced by interment, and that so soon and so spontaneously that I doubt whether there now lives among them an eye-witness of the traditional ceremony.

With the arrival of the missionaries, what remained of their old customs gradually gave way: ceremonial paraphernalia were burnt; sequestration of women was stopped; in most cases landed estates were parcelled out to heads of families, and, in general, such practices as were distinctively aboriginal and unconnected with, or resulting from, human frailty, disappeared as if by enchantment. To-day it is considered insulting among the Carriers to be called an Indian, and, in their estimation, a person of Caucasian descent is no more a white man than the redskin who conforms to European social notions. Their innate power of imitation and propensity for self-betterment have also led them into appreciating the value of literary knowledge. They now read and write their own language, and even support a monthly periodical of their own.

As regards their present material condition, this much can be said: that, as a rule, their houses are just as well built, and often quite as comfortable, as those of any white man who ever ventured in their country. They possess horses and cattle, which they keep in stables and feed at the cost of much personal exertion during their long winters. Close by their habitations some of them have regular carpenter shops, wherein they turn out such difficult work as window-sashes, fancy boxes, etc., while in every village a number boast the possession of sleighs, cutters, pack-saddles (and, among the Chikoh'tin, riding-saddles) of their own manufacture. They dress well, insist upon getting such garments, household utensils and working tools as are the most in vogue among white men; and, in a few cases, it is even amusing to see some of them attired in their best clothes parading the village street, cane in hand, as a dandy would in some fashionable resort.

¹ Stuart's Lake, where the author is stationed.