

At length an idea occurred to me which I thought would meet the case ; so with all the gravity I could command, I asked, " Did your fish die as well as the animals ? " " Oh, no," said he, " we had great plenty of fish ; more than usual ; and only for them we would have died." I replied, " Well, you know that in my journey here I came all the way by water, I scarcely touched the land at all." At this point of the argument he laughed outright. All his objections vanished, and we were as good friends as before. The matter-of-fact Anglo-Saxon, who is unacquainted with Indian mythology, will not comprehend the above. The wild Indian knows but little of the laws of nature, or rather ignores them. To him the world is full of the supernatural. I was charged with the exercise of vast supernatural powers, for purposes of destruction, and nothing could disabuse his mind of this belief. Seeing it of no use, I did not try to combat it, but argued from his own principles, that if I had these powers they would have been exerted on the water, on which I had made my journey, and not on the land, and the fact of there being more fish than usual, showed that my supernatural power was exercised beneficially, and not maliciously as he had charged me. In common parlance, he insisted that I was a great wizard or witch, and would believe nothing else. In reply, the substance of my argument was, that admitting I was a witch at all, I was a water-witch and not a land-witch ; and that as there was such a great abundance of fish after my former visit, it must be I was a good, and not a bad witch. This was a course of argument that could not be relied on permanently, and that extreme necessity alone could justify ; and before another occasion of the like kind should come up I saw the necessity for imparting instruction on these matters. There was, however, not so much danger of violence as the gravity of the charges against me might lead us to suppose ; for if he really supposed I possessed the powers attributed to me, they were as available for my own protection as for their destruction ; so that thus far, this superstition carried its own antidote with it. On one occasion, some twenty-five years ago, a young woman died at the Mission where I was residing. A pagan, and a conjurer, being there at the time, boasted publicly that he had killed her. I was surprised at his thus voluntarily assuming the guilt of a murderer, and exposing himself to the danger of punishment. I had serious apprehensions that the friends of the deceased would take him at his word, but they seemed to take no notice of him at all ; for if he had such powers they would create as much fear and dread as a desire for revenge. No one, however, put much faith in his professions, his sole object seems to have been to gain credit for a great medicine man.

I remained about three weeks at this place, busy every day from morning till night, in conversation, visiting and teaching. About half a mile from the fort there is a high basaltic cliff, to which I used to go daily for exercise. From the top of this cliff the view was very extensive, mingling the grand and the sublime, and a touch of the terrific and beautiful. Around me was a lake of very irregular form, 70 miles long and 40 broad, but with many large islands, so that the whole lake was cut into channels of no great breadth. In scarcely any part of this lake can you get very far from land, and at the same time in no part of it can you get where you can see land all round you. In one direction or another you will have a watery horizon. Here and there the mountains are bare and black, and