

What the White Man May Learn from the Indian

By GEORGE WHARTON JAMES

HIS first lesson is his love of out-of-doors. He lives out-of-doors and he thinks out-of-doors. He is spiritualized out-of-doors. He understands the storm movements better than most of our experts. To him the thunder is the voice of an angry God and the zephyr is God happy with man. There is no race in such natural sympathy with religion. The Indian lives religion.

He sleeps out-of-doors, and has done so for centuries, proving that his ancestors knew more about healthful habits than the palefaces, who have only now learned to cure the white plague by the same method. There is another thing about the Indian. He is not possessed of the notion that the nose is an organ of speech. He does not talk through his nose, but with mouth closed breathes through his nostrils. The Indian mother, though she does not know why, makes her baby keep its mouth closed. She will press the lips together, and if the baby continues to try to breathe through its mouth, she straps the jaws closed with rawhide, believing that if the baby cannot get its respiration through the nose, it had better die, because it will never be healthy and strong.

The Indian breathes deep. His is not chest respiration, but the breathing from the lower ribs. You and I have wondered that in a great theatre we could hear Sarah Bernhardt's whispers. I went to hear her, and saw that, as with the Indian women, her waist-line was indistinct. I forgot her art in watching her breathing. Her vocal chords are not stronger or her enunciation much clearer than that of others of the stage, but there is the great power of deep breathing—the bellows behind the voice—so that you can hear her whisper. Like the Indian, she breathes deep.

I have known an Indian to cover eighty miles on foot in a day, and he was seventy years old. I have known Indians to cover two hundred miles on horseback in a day.

How can they do it? They live in the open, sleep in the open, and are an out-of-door people. And, also, they teach the palefaces the further lesson that teeth were not given to men to dig their graves with, but actually to grind up their food, so that it might become the strength of their bodies.

Now, I hope to live to be one hundred years old at least, as many of the Indians have done who did not come into too close contact with civilization. I believe I will live these years because I live their life. I live outdoors and sleep outdoors; I masticate my food, and I expose my body to the sun, believing, like the Indian, that the tanned face is the healthy face. I further try, like the Indian, to be thoroughly frank with my fellows, saying 'yes' when I mean it, and 'no' when that is the right answer. You can rely on the word of an Indian. He is your friend or your enemy, and he wants you to be sure that he is one or the other.

You talk a great deal about your civilization. Before Columbus came to America the Indians knew the art of shampooing. They take roots and make a fine lather with hot water. With this they rub the hair delightfully. An Indian woman once gave me a shampoo. She was a grandmother and the daughter of a chief. When she had lathered my head she proceeded to shampoo my beard. The operation had the other Indians in a fit of laughter.

The Indian laughs as merrily as a child and just as naturally as a child, unless the white man is about. Then he is solemn. All his evils he attributes to the paleface. Governments step in and take his lands and evict him, and it is not to be wondered at that he looks upon us as untrustworthy, while at the same time he is eager to give up his own life for the sake of a white man whom he trusts. He is the splendid, noble, original American, worthy of citizenship, with his heart open to the truth of Christianity, a ward of the nation to be protected.

If You Don't Want to "Get Consumption"

Don't live in rooms where there is *no fresh air*.
Don't work in rooms where there is *no fresh air*.
Don't sleep in rooms where there is *no fresh air*.
Don't be afraid to keep your windows open day
and night.