

Young People's Department.



THE DOGS AND THEIR SLEIGH.

SLEIGHS AND SLEIGH DOGS.

It is not often that children of the far North have much to do with sleigh driving; their experience of that mode of travelling is mostly limited to the ten or twelve miles over which their friends may propose to take them, as a great treat, once or twice in the course of the winter. Yet the sleigh is part of the necessary equipment of every mission station, and forms an important agency in the work of the mission itself. Among the Indians there is always a rivalry in the get-up of their sleigh and dog harness—the latter, made by dint of immense labour, of Moose leather, all the metal appendages of which are procured from the store of the Hudson's Bay Company. Each dog has also to be furnished with a gay "tapis" or saddle cloth made by the Indian women, and in the production of which all the taste and skill and power of invention of which they are so capable is expended.

Some of the tapis are made of deer's skin, with quaint devices worked on them, but the most popular are of dark blue cloth, elaborately beaded and adorned with broad fringes of wool or leather. It is not often that our Indian silk or bead work finds its way into these more southern regions, but whenever it is seen it excites wonder and admiration from its delicate tracery and the effective mingling of the colours; they have an instinctive knowledge of perspective, too, which they often bring to bear upon a turned back leaf or distant spray, and in bead-work their skill in fixing the beads firmly is well

adapted to the rough usage their handiwork has to encounter in the long winter journeys.

Another necessary appendage to the dog harness is the chain of bells; this is fastened on the collar or across the gay tapis. Each dog should have six or eight bells, and the merry tinkle of these doubtless keeps up the spirit of both dogs and men, as surely as do the bagpipes in a Highland regiment. The sound of sleigh bells has a friendly, cheering effect upon all (dogs and men alike) as it is caught across the snowy plain or icebound river.

How the sleigh dogs manage to live is often a problem which is hard to solve. The greater part of their time, poor brutes, they are kept on the brink of starvation, for the Indians find it hard enough to feed themselves, and every morsel of meat being demolished, the bones are kept to break and boil down, and so converted into grease. At the Mission stations part of the Fall fishery is reserved for the dogs—fortune favours them some seasons when the frost does not come at the very nick of time, and so our hung fish is anything but savoury, and unless dire necessity compels us to make use of it (as is the case sometimes), it is reserved for the dogs' winter supply. One or two white fish per day will keep a dog in good working condition.

A well-equipped sleigh should have four dogs harnessed tandem fashion. The sleigh-driver, with reins and whip in hand, runs an easy jaunty pace by the side—his whip handle elaborately carved and ornamented—the lash of leather cleverly twisted, its efficiency tested on the backs of the poor brutes with but short