

PICTURE-WRITING OF THE BLACKFEET.

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The natives of the American Continent preserved their legends and traditions through the agency of men who kept an accurate remembrance of them with important historical events by means of wampum records. A more permanent form, however, was needed for the recording of events and conveying them to others, which originated and developed the system of picture-writing. Etchings made upon rocks and trees, pictures painted on the lodges, birch bark and buffalo-ropes retained the knowledge of events for future generations. The totem-posts of the Tshimpshéans and the grave-posts of the Ojibways represent one kind of picture-writing limited in its application and yet necessary for recording facts. From the most primitive form of writing has this system developed, in the rough outline or full picture rudely drawn, through a symbolic stage until the perfect stage of writing was produced. In the Ojibway pictography the symbol for lightning is a rattlesnake. Colonel Mallery in explaining this development says:—"It can be readily seen how a hawk with bright eye and lofty flight might be selected as a symbol of divinity and royalty, and that the crocodile should denote darkness, while a slightly further step in metaphysical symbolism made the ostrich feather, from the equality of its filaments, typical of truth." In some of the pictographs the name of a man is made by making the head of a man and then placing the bird or animal which represents his name over the crown of the head, as in designating Chief *Red Crow* (Mikasto) a crow painted red is placed in position. Another method is to place the animal which represents the name upon the pictograph. This is shown in the *Selkirk Treaty*, where the chiefs signed their names by drawing animals representing them, which were placed opposite the tracts of land which they claimed. The appended copy of the signatures of the contracting parties to the *Selkirk Treaty* is taken from "The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba, the North-West Territories and Keewatin."