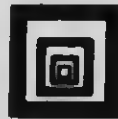


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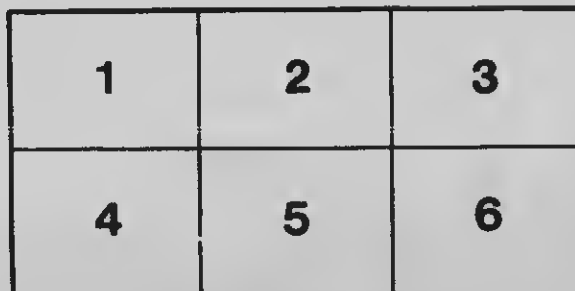
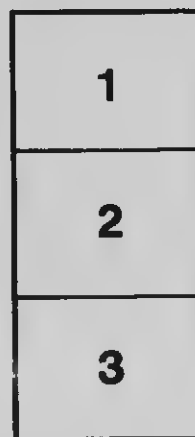
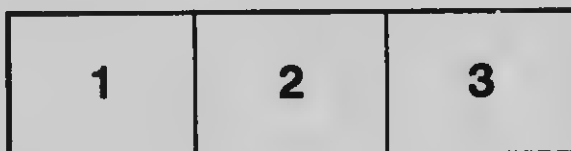
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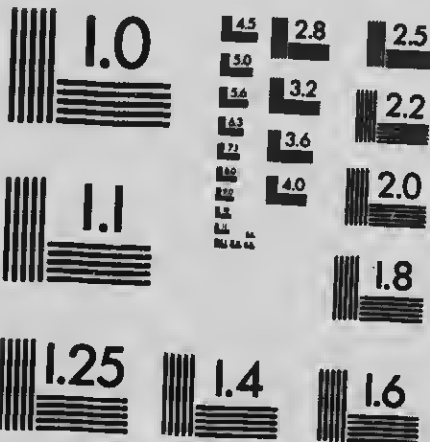
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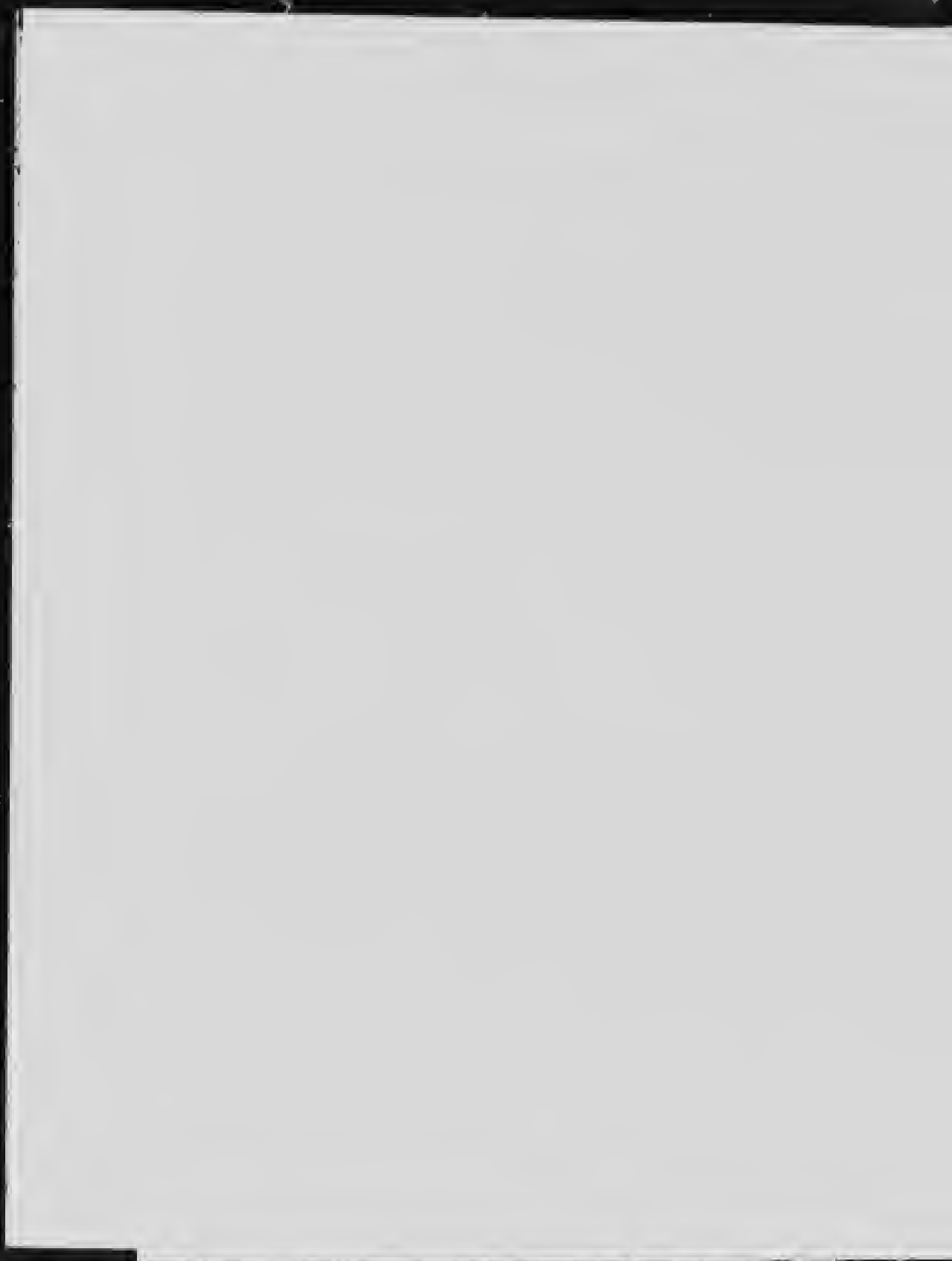
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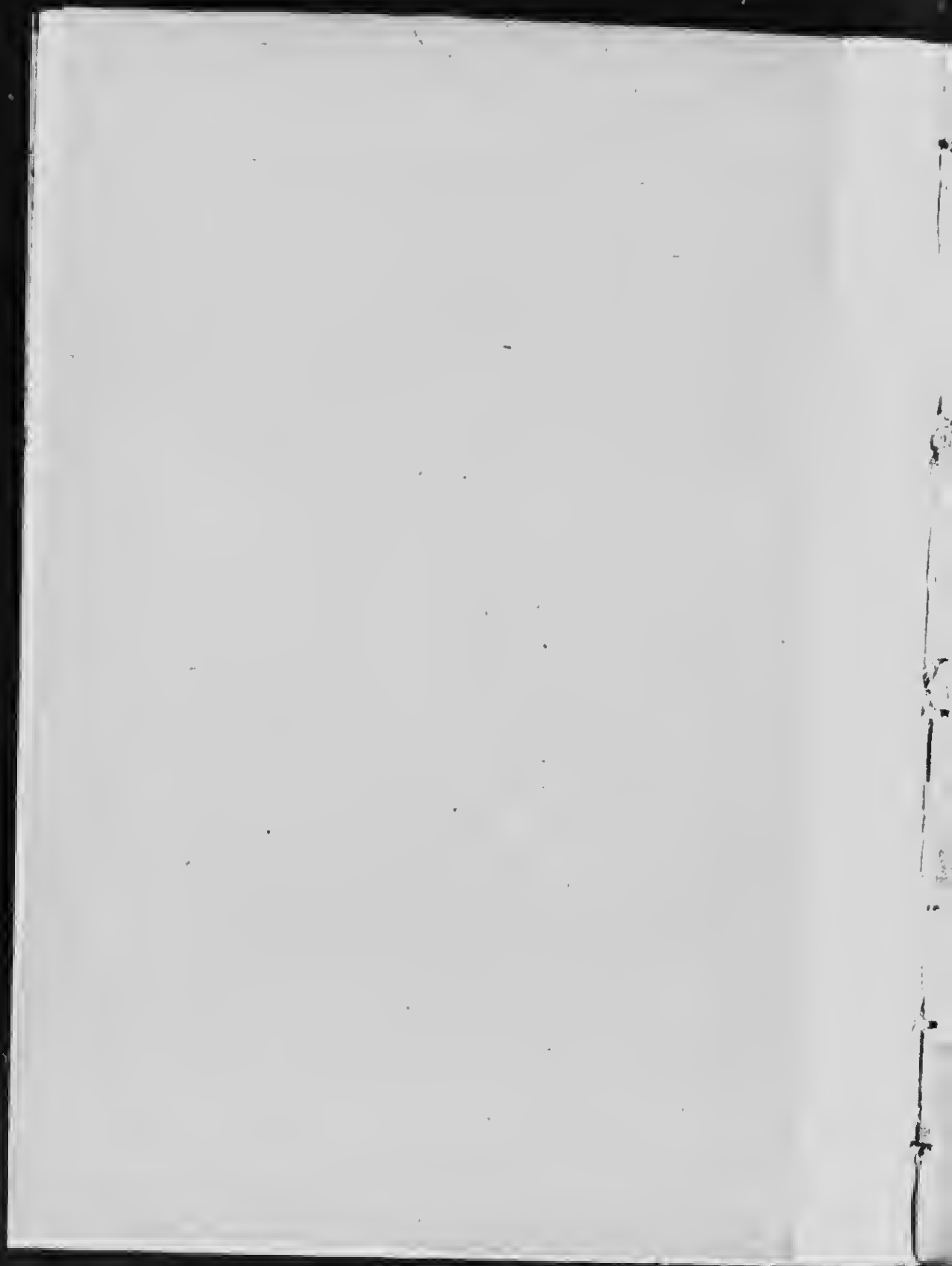


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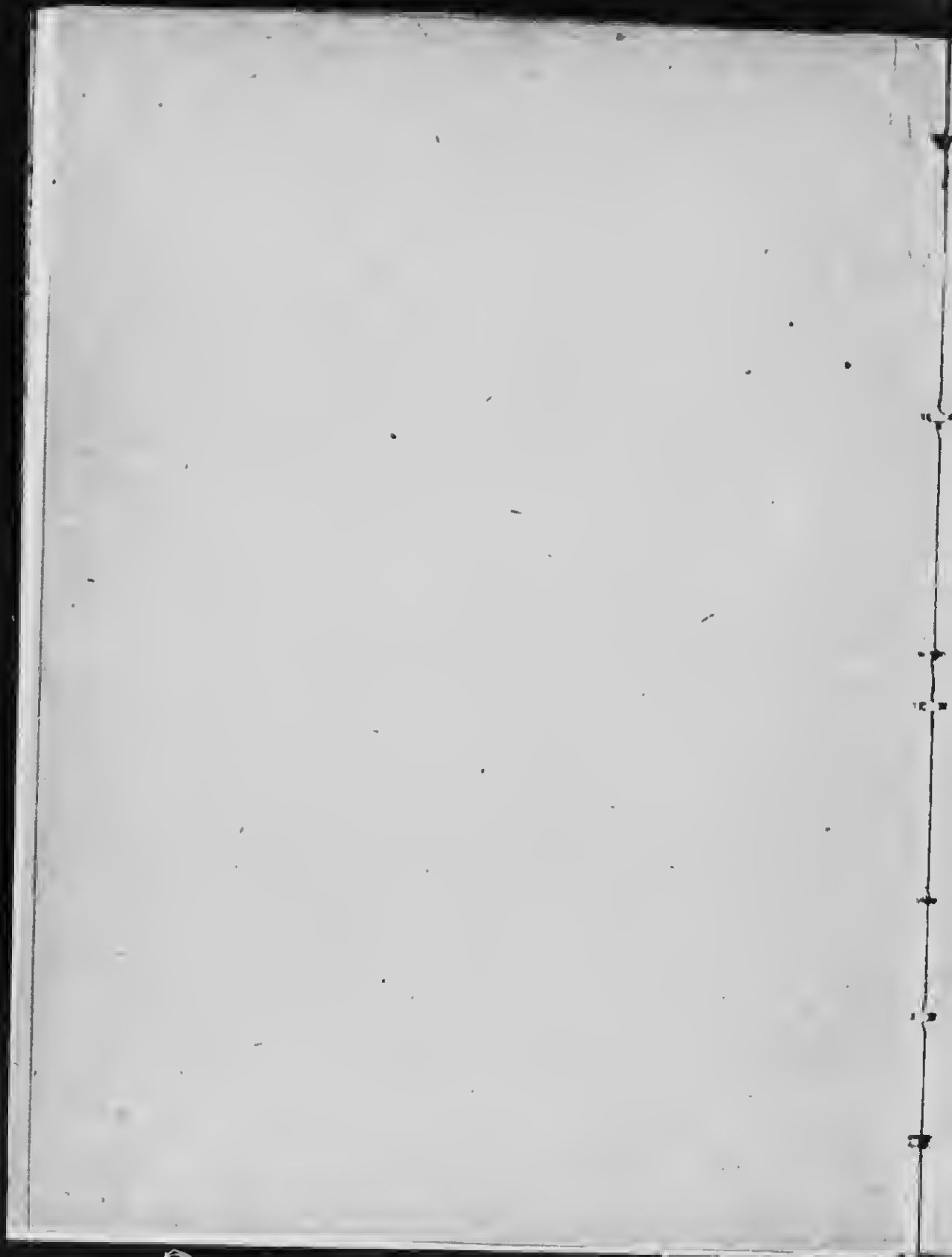
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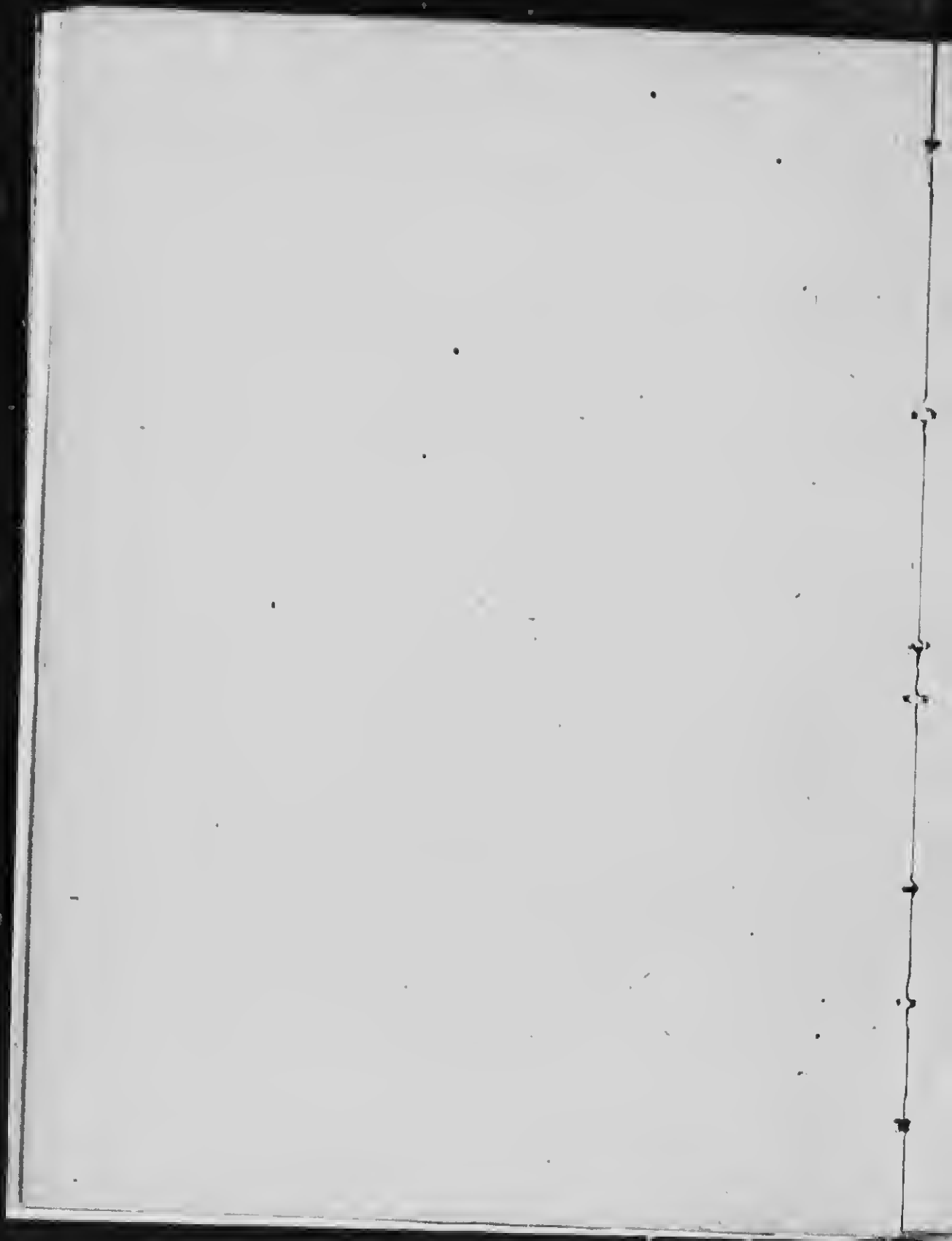
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THE BALLAD OF TSOQALEM

Accepted by the Royal Society of Canada as part of their Proceedings, 1918.



TSOQALEM

A WEIRD INDIAN
TALE OF THE
COWICHAN
MONSTER

A BALLAD BY
— LIONEL
HAWEIS

FOREWORD BY
-- CHARLES
HILL-TOUT

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FOREWORD.

WHEN one considers what a rich mine of literary wealth lies embedded in the folk-tales and legends of the native tribes of this continent, one is surprised so little use has been made of them for poetic themes.

The story which forms the subject of Mr. Haweis's poem appears to have some foundation in fact. Tsoqaiem, according to the Indians, was a real historic character, a member of the Cowichan tribe, a Vancouver Island division of that linguistic group of the Salish stock known to us under the term Halkomaiem, whose habitat is and was the Lower Fraser Valley. Mr. Haweis has used the poet's license freely, but he has been eminently successful in maintaining the true Indian atmosphere, and the story gains an added interest by his poetic presentation of it. Some of the passages are extremely fresh and beautiful as for example the opening verses of Canto V, and again in Canto VII where, in the quaint conceit of the 'Flaher of the Night' he has caught in the happiest manner possible the very spirit of the Indian mind.

The belief of the Indians in a personal totem or guardian spirit lies at the very root of their religious conceptions as well as influencing deeply all their social relations. They recognised, however, no Supreme Being who controlled the universe, no high gods who ruled the destinies

of men; they believed in a multiplicity of spirits. Every object had its own soul or spirit, distinct from its material form, and could live an independent ghostly existence. Not only those objects we call animate, but also every insensate object—a blade of grass, a stick or a stone, the very tools and utensils they made and employed, each and all possessed spirit-forms (snams). Thus the spirit or ghost-world was a very real world to them, ever present and ever encompassing them—was, indeed, the source of all the ills and pleasures of their existence.

Among the Salish tribes, especially those of the interior, every man and woman had customarily his or her friendly personal spirit or "snam". The method of acquiring these seems to have been practically the same everywhere. The seeker, like the youth Tsoqalem, went apart into the forest or mountains and undertook a more or less lengthy course of 'training' and self-discipline. This course among the Salish continued for a period of from four days to as many years, according to the object the seeker had in view. Prolonged fasts, repeated bathings and sweatings, such as are referred to in Cantos IV and V, and other exhausting bodily exercises were the usual means adopted for inducing the desired state—the mystic dreams and visions in which the neophyte met and became mystically related to his "snam."

Viewing nature as they did, it is not surprising that the Indians believed in monsters of the kind Mr. Haweis has depicted. These creatures, it was thought, possessed 'mystery' powers of various orders, which powers they

would sometimes bestow upon those who sought their haunts and found favor in their sight.

How far the incidents of this story are literally true it is now impossible to say, as myth and fact are inextricably woven together in it; but there can be little doubt that an Indian of the character of Tsoqalem existed some generations ago among the Cowichans, and met with a tragic end at the hand of a woman, somewhat in the manner recorded in the story.

CHARLES HILL-TOUT.

University Club,
Vancouver, B.C.



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*From the Archives of The Vancouver
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B. C.*

The Ballad of Tsoqalem

CANTO I.

Qaiyakwetsten, great chief and medicine-man, tells the reason of his fathering the boy, Tsoqalem.

THE story of Tsoqalem—thief
And brute, and more was he—
An aged Halkomalem chief
Once tried to tell to me.

Squat in a blanket, fringed and striped
And wrapped around, with both
His nervous hands he waved, and wiped
With one across his mouth;—
It seemed as though he should have piped
Of dollars and a drouth!

THE BALLAD OF

Not he! Although he chewed a straw,
And whittled sticks for sale
For all that I could see, or saw,
He had his pride, he had his squaw,
And last, he had this tale.

"Tsoqalem—ah!" . . . as who should say
'His hateful memory clings'—
'Twas thus he spoke his name that day,
And made as though to wipe away
Abominable things.

Shorn of all interest, his art
Of life was flickering
To finish, though he turned to start
At every trivial thing,
Scarred as he was in face and heart
With his adventuring.

"Tsoqalem—ah! He break my plan,
He everything destroy;
I, Qaiyakwetsten, medicine-man,
I try to teach the boy.

TSOQALEM

"I catch him some-time for a talk—
He run away again;
He big fine boy, and when he walk,
Can't hear him walking then.

"Run like a deer, and very light
With foot and make no sound;
Like thief he roam, like brute he fight,
And all his play was scratch and bite,
And roll upon the ground.

"He always going naked,—he
Not wearing any clo'es,
With water-running mouth to see,
And water-running nose.

"And all the time and every while
He look from underneath
And sideways up; and when he smile,
He showing all his teeth.

THE BALLAD OF

"Oh! much he look at me, and then
He make me half-afraid,
Because his eyes not eyes of men—"
And here he wiped his mouth again;—
The face the fellow made!

"He look at me, he know he can
Whatever I shall do;
I, Qaiyakwetsten, medicine-man,
Was father of him, too.

"His mother slave I take one day;
She lay like deaf-and-dumb,
For not one word that she will say
Till soon her baby come.

"I think to kill him as I take,
But when I hear his cries,
I look, and see I make mistake;—
He very fine big eyes.

TSOQALEM

"I cover up again the fur
To keep him from the rain;
A. so I give him back to her,—
And make mistake again.

"'Oh, kill him! kill him!' then she cry,
'This boy belong to you;
I think it good thing if he die
Before I kill him, too!'

"But then I take her at my will,
And tell her all her lies,
And hold her at the throat until
I see that something come and fill
Her very fine big eyes.

"I look — I look upon a thing
That is not good to see;
And then I know a spirit bring
A work to do for me.

THE BALLAD OF

"And so I tell her 'yes,'—my plan
Will show what I can do;
I, Qaiyakwetsten, medicine-man,
Was father of him, too!"



TSOQALEM

CANTO II.

The chief falls silent, and his squaw takes up the tale.

HIS words half-querulous began
And ended with a wail,—
Old Qaiyakwetsten, medicine-man,
Who told the half-told tale.

For suddenly in mid-repeat
He ceased, I knew not why,
And shuffled loosely with his feet,
And shifted with his eye.

THE BALLAD OF

As one whom recollection crows,
Nor ever told me more,
He walked into a dead-man's house,
And closed the dead-man's door.

As one who crawls into his shell,
Distrustful of a friend;
Or, as perhaps who fears a spell
He cannot break nor bend,
Just so he set himself to tell
A tale without an end.

I turned about . . . A crooked squaw
Was plucking at my knee;
She was, or had been plaiting straw
As busy as could be . . .

Old burns had scored and drawn the jaw
Most horrible to see;
And wrinkled was the face I saw,
As is the cedar-tree.

TSOQALEM

And as I passed, as pass I must,
She looked from underneath
And sideways up!—with strange disgust
I shivered to the teeth.

Those eyes! I thought I saw a hint
Of haunting in her eyes;
Or was it but a sunny glint
Of light?—or just surmise?

Or, was it menace that I saw?
Or was it only pain?—
I know not; but I know the squaw
Called out, "Come back again!

"Come back! Come back!" The more she cried
That mocking cry, "Come back!"
The more I shook the thought aside,
And hurried down the track
It rang like bells at eventide
Within my head, alack!

THE BALLAD OF

For every day that cry I heard,
Who was both loth and fain
At last I took the coward-word
Of courage in my teeth—"Absurd!"—
And back I went again.

And then she croaked this little lay:

"The meat is raw before ye slay;
So eat it raw as well ye may;
For hungry folk can eat alway!"

And when I think of that old squaw
Who squatted at my knee,
And all the horrid things I saw,
The things she made me see,
My Christian soul is filled with awe
Of all she showed to me. . . .

Nay, but a tithe may I set down
Of this, howe'er I fail

TSOQALEM

To ease my memory, and drown
The thought within the tale.

This story of Tsoqalem seems
In sense so deeply sown,
It haunts my days, and in my dreams
It claims me for its own.



THE BALLAD OF

CANTO III.

How the chief, intent upon reforming Tsoqalem, begins his good work upon the boy ; of the ceremonial he employed and the instant power of the "medicine" ; and of the love, through pity of the ordeal, aroused in a girl's breast.

AND so the wrinkled squaw began
To end what I've begun,—
This squaw, who was no other than
The mother of the one
Whom Qaiyakwetsten, medicine-man,
Betook him for a son.

And this he did because he saw
As in the mother's eyes,
That Power which passed all mortal law—
The Power that never dies.

TSOQALEM

Nobly he dreamed to use this Power
To serve a noble aim . . .
Alack! it was an evil hour
He lent the brat a name!

* * * * *

TSOQALEM—wild, as I have said—
The forest was his home;
And where a bear had made his bed
He killed the bear, and dwelt instead . . .
Hence was he wont to roam,
Hunting the food whereon he fed
Of salmon-grease and berry-bread,
And here at night he laid his head,
And dreamed of honey-comb.

For oft the folk would see him creep
Around the Lodge at eve,
Who thought of naught but food and sleep—
The food that he could thieve.

THE BALLAD OF

And so he grew both great and strong,
And left the child behind;
But knew no thing of right nor wrong,
According to his kind.

That now the sacrificial plan
Which he alone could know—
He, Qaiyakwetsten, medicine-man,
Recalled, and caught him as he ran,
Nor would he let him go.

Saying, "My boy, and art thou here?"
He looked into his eyes;
"Though nothing love, yet nothing fear,
And I will make thee wise"

"Tsoqalem—hark! Go fetch me now
A bramble full of thorn,
To do according to the vow
I made when thou wert born."

TSOQALEM

Tsoqalem grinned, and presently
Tore up a thorny strand,
Clawing upon it savagely,
Yet brought obedient as could be,
A bramble of the blackberry,
And gave it in his hand.

And this he looped into a fan,
And bound the ends in place,
For thus, according to his plan,
Did Qaiyakwetsten, medicine-man,
Who thrust it in his face!

Four times—four times he flayed his face
Therewith across the eyes;
Four times he spoke the words of grace
He knew would make him wise.

And though that savage folk and grim
Full-hardened were to woe;
Yet some were there could pity him
Who saw the red blood flow.

THE BALLAD OF

Of these was one soft-featured maid
Who watched him play his part,
And called him cheer; and all was said
In pity of her heart.

The which Tsoqalem heard and saw,
Despite the rosy flood
Alack! that she were moved to draw
That awful smile of blood!

And then away—away he fled
And sheltered in the glade;
Within his cave he laid his head,
And dreamed—he loved a maid!



TSOQALEM

CANTO IV.

How Tsoqalem awakes to a human appreciation of things good; how intuitively he enters upon "animistic meditation," and of the regeneration which takes place within him.

WITH the first sun he walked; and here
At arm's-length was a fawn,
Which gazed upon him without fear.
He strung his bow—but lo! 'twas clear
He had no mind to kill the deer;
For lo! again, he had the cheer
Of joyfulness at dawn.

He stood awhile . . . What strangest thing
Had happened in the night?—
Then he bethought him of the sting
Of brambles in his sight.

THE BALLAD OF

But yet he saw as plain—nay, more;
He saw that all around
Good things and great were arching o'er
The good things of the ground.

Above the brakes the lofty trees,
Above the trees the sky,
His senses freshened in the breeze,
And gladdened in his eye.

And he was glad to be alive,
And glad to let things live;
As glad to be allowed to strive
Sunward as they,—the more they strive,
As they the more to give.

The mists were melting in the wood
The fogs within his heart
Faded before that growing good
Which is the nobler part.

TSOQALEM

And, looking inwardly, he saw
The vision of a maid
In token of the cheerful law
Of smiling unafraid.

He learned to hope; his spirit burned
The brighter for a tear,—
Which fell the instant that he learned
That other law, of fear

The fear that's love She loved him!—him,
Whose nature was so base?— .
Whose very smile how tense and grim
Upon his wounded face?

To wash, to purge, to purify—
These things he now must do;
And all the while his seeing eye
Grew wide as heaven to descry
The truth of all things true.

THE BALLAD OF

And as with honour kindness came
To sweeten every thought,
He learned how grievous was the shame
That brings them all to naught;
And, dreaming thus, a mystic flame
Of sylvan magic breathed a Name
He knew not that he sought.

Yet how should Indian misdeem
His snam?—as prone he sank
Plunging his face into the gleam
Of waters there, and of that stream
Of absolution drank.

Anon he rose in strength; and helved
Bone of the mountain-sheep,
Wherewith beside the stream he delved
A hole both wide and deep,
And deftly banked it where it shelved,
And watched the waters seep.

And reared a sylvan pyramid
Of boughs against the sun

TSOQALEM

Above the pool; and all he did
Was true and throughly done.

From sticks he carried in his hair
Of cotton-wood and brier,
He rubbed a spark and blew a flare,
Flushing the pool with boulders there
He baked beneath a fire.

Thus walled and roofed about with fir,
He sat him down therein
To purify his soul, and stir
The ashes of his sin.



THE BALLAD OF

CANTO V.

How Tsoqalem falls into the dream-trance of spiritual rejuvenation ; and of the passion which possesses him at the appearance of the girl, whose sympathy and affection have constrained her to seek him out.

'T WAS eve . . . Athwart his foliage-heaped
Embrasure, all the glare
Of curious day that came and peeped
At last discerned him there.

He rose and stretched him on the bank,
And all the long night through
Familiar spirits, rank on rank,
Possessed his soul, painting the blank
Perfervid hours, and rose and sank
In ghostly retinue.

TSOQALEM

And all the night he naked lay
Beside the babbling stream,
The moon cast down her silver ray
And purged him with the beam.

That so he waked—all thought withdrawn
Of sickness or dismay;
Invoked, the Spirit of the Dawn
Turned all his Night to Day.

And then—as well it might behoove—
That happened in his sight
Which proved, if any sight could prove,
The World was full of Light.

For lo! surpassing all denial
Of all that only seems,—
There stood the Maiden of his Trial,
The Virgin of his Dreams!

THE BALLAD OF

At half-a-cast she stared amazed
To find him where he stood,
Tracked down as though the trail were blazed
Athwart the tangled wood;
And lo! she knew, as well she gazed,
Tsoqalem was grown good.

And he, Tsoqalem, dared not move
For awe of such a sight,
Which proved—if any sight could prove—
• The World so full of Light.

And much he marvelled that the maid
Should seek him in this wise;
And more that all for which he prayed
Should come in such a guise;
But most that there should be betrayed
Heart-secrets in the eyes.

Wonderful love, sprung from a dumb
Reluctance to depart! . . .

TSOQALEM

She stayed to love, who erst had come
In pity of her heart.

And as in Light the lovers stood
Entreating not in vain,
What gentle commune sweet and good
Then passed between these twain
I shall not tell, and if I could
I would not tell again.



THE BALLAD OF

CANTO VI.

How on her return through the forest the girl meets a Monster which, after raiding her village, is carrying off a youth she recognises as Ulka; of her brothers whom she meets in pursuit of the Monster they take to be this very Tsoqalem, grown worse instead of better; and of their suspicions aroused at finding their sister so far afield, and in distraction.

‘FAREWELL! farewell!’ exclaimed the maid;
“The sun is calling me,—
See where his finger in the shade
Beckons from yonder tree,

And points the trail adown the glade! . . .
Red in the face is he,
As who would not be disobeyed!—
“Haiyako!” murmured she.

TSOQALEM

And down the woodland ways as fleet
As any doe she fled—
Even, I think, Tsoqalem's feet
Never so lightly sped.

And as a bird sings blithe and gay
So blithely then sang she;
When lo! there met her in the way
A fearful thing to see.

A horrid beast, beyond compare
Of reason or disguise;
A kind of Man, a kind of Bear,
With wolfish teeth and wolfish hair,
And claws, and dreadful eyes.

* * * *

And when I think of that old squaw
Who squatted at my knee,
I cannot paint the Thing I saw—
The Thing she made me see;

THE BALLAD OF

For oh! my soul is filled with awe
Of all she showed to me.

* * * *

All beasts she knew, but This which held
Her rooted to the ground,—
Against this Horror she rebelled,
And reeled as in a swoon.

For, as she gazed upon the Thing
Which stirred her soul's alarm,
It crouched and inade as though to spring,
But feared to loose that other thing
It clutched beneath its arm.

And then she shrieked, and ran and hid,
Choking with every breath
As though she fled—as flee she did—
A very Feast of Death.

TSOQALEM

But as she thrust in mid-career
Athwart some woodland-lace,
She found her brothers stalking near,
And they were girt to hunt the deer,—
Her brothers face to face! . . .
And half she fainted with her fear,
And half with her disgrace.

Her, ere she fell or strove to speak,
With many words they seized:
"Dost thou flee also whom we seek—
Tsoqalem—him, the Beast?"

"Tsoqalem? That could never be!"
She cried with eyes a-swim. . . .
"'Tis he!" said they. . . "Never!" quoth she;
"Tsoqalem—what of him?"

"And what of thee to say us nay?
Is it for thee to stare?
Are all thy silly wits astray?
Hast thou no knowledge of this day
Of hunt and rape and scare?"

THE BALLAD OF

"Ulka,—Tsoqalem seized the youth,
And hales him to his lair"
Between her terror and the truth,
She cried, "Not him!—not there! . . .

"Ah, hear me! I have seen a Thing
Which stirred my soul's alarm;
Which crouched and made as though to spring,
But feared to loose that living thing,
Our Ulka 'neath its arm;—

"A horrid Beast, beyond compare
Of reason and disguise;
A kind of Man, a kind of Bear,
With wolfish teeth and wolfish hair,
And claws, and dreadful eyes!"

And as she looked her brothers o'er
She stared about in woe—
Then shrank and shrieked in terror, for
She saw at her elbow
A vision, whether less or more,
I think she could not know:

TSOQALEM

The vision of a ghastly feast,
Where smiling tense and grim,
Tsoqalem—and the Hairy Beast
Tore Ulka limb from limb.

Her brothers—(was there none to feel
For her, nor understand?)—
Her brothers scoffed to see her kneel,
And scorned her as she scanned
The vacant air in vain appeal,
And beat it with her hand.

And down she sank upon the track,
And fell as though she died . . .
To this poor stricken maid, alack
That death should be denied!—
Full roughly then they bore her back
That was Tsoqalem's bride.



THE BALLAD OF

CANTO VII.

How the hunger of Tsoqalem's ceremonial fast hastened the moral break-down which passion had begun ; of his own meeting with the Monster, and of his sudden and complete degeneration in consequence of that association.

AND now the Fisher of the Night
Was trolling in the Sky;
His cloudy Craft was lapped in Light
Who sailed and fished on high.

There where no earthly Aspect mars
The heavenly Seas, whose Tides
Are flecked and decked with cresting Stars,
The crafty Fisher rides.

TSOQALEM

And as he rides he softly sings
The magic Song of Sleep,
The while he deftly baits and flings
His Tackle in the Deep.

Not every Bait the same to him,
Nor every Line as thin—
Oh! he had Baits for every Whim,
And Lines for every Sin;
For many are the Fish that swim
The Seas he fishes in!

And so to-night he had his Wish
Who had not long to wait;
Nor did he loose the briny Leash
Which hooked him to his Fate
Tsoqalem—was the Salmon-fish,
And Hunger—was the Bait!

* * * *

Tsoqalem plunged into the shade
Of woods, where he could see

THE BALLAD OF

A sunny finger down the glade
Was curled about a tree.

Oh! many little spirits prined
To mischief of their moods
Beset his way, and minced and mimed
And muttered in their hoods;
For many little spirits climbed
And beckoned in the woods.

A throng of elfin-shadows spread
Their nets from side to side;
And all the Spirits of the Dead
Muffled their arms about his head,
And clogged him in his stride.

Till dark was folded down on dark,
And he was lost to light,
Fast-weary and perplexed—but hark!
What other creature of remark
Was wandering in the night?

TSOQALEM

Almost he feared! He stood, nor stirred;
For, though he could not bring
His eyes to pierce the dark, he heard
A sound of ravening.

Some beast was feasting on its prey—
Some animal he bore
No malice. Onward from this day
All men should speak him well, and say
"Tsoqalem is no more!"

And he would take that other Name
His spirit told him of,
And he would stamp upon his Shame,
And glory in his Love.

And Love alone should guide his feet,
And blood he would not spill;
Nay, hardly would he kill to eat,
Who once would eat to kill.

THE BALLAD OF

And as he wandered, presently
He came upon the feast;
And marvelled greatly there to see
A man, and not a beast.

As tall as one and strong as three,
And clawed and fanged, he deemed—
Despite his hairy armory,—
In kindness and in charity
He deemed him Man; no Beast was he,
But Man indeed he seemed.

For thus the gloom of bank and tree
And boulder did conspire
To mould their contours constantly
Upon his pure desire;
And yet he marvelled much to see
A feast without a fire!

"Thou hast no fire," Tsoqalem cried,
"Who featest in this wise?"—
"They need no fire," the Man replied,
"Who have the Wonder-Eyes!"

TSOQALEM

"The Wonder-Eyes!" Tsoqalem cried . . .
"Yea, eyes of wondrous sight,
Are Wonder-Eyes," the Man replied,
"The eyes which see by night!

"But now let be and eat! Be wise
Who art an-hungered sore;
And we shall speak of Wonder-Eyes
Thereafter, not before."

And this he chanted in a lay:

"The meat is raw before ye slay;
So eat it raw as well ye may;
For hungry folk can eat alway!"

Tsoqalem feared, but at the last
He ate, and found it sweet . . .
Alack! to break his holy fast
Upon such horrid meat!

THE BALLAD OF

"And now—" the Monster said anon,
Growling in awful glee
To see Tsoqalem dote upon
Such hospitality—

"And now, according to our plan,—
Thine eyes! . . . He did right well,
Did Qaiyakwetsten, medicinc-man;
But there was more to tell.

"He gave thee eyes, and made thee wise,
And taught thee wrong from right;
But I shall give thee Wonder-Eyes—
The eyes which see by night!

"He gave thee much who gave thee both
The store-house and the store,
And did according to his oath;
But I shall give thee more,
Tsoqalem, who art nothing loth
To learn my Wonder-Lorc."

TSOQALEM

And so he pierced Tsoqalem's eyes
With bill of humming-bird,
And drew the blood; and bade him rise,
And tell him if in any wise
He saw a figure of the skies,—
Or heard what should be heard.

"Yea," said Tsoqalem, "now I hear
What ne'er I heard before—
The Horror at the heart of Fear—
A thousand things, and more!"

Then deeper yet he probed his eyes
To light upon the flaw,
And licked the blood; and bade him rise
Again, and say if anywise
He saw a figure of the skies,
And tell him what he saw.

"Yea," said Tsoqalem, "now I see
A figure of the skies;
And, broken 'thwart a rooted tree,
Lies Ulka,—whom thou gavest me,
And all to make me wise"

THE BALLAD OF

"Yea," said Tsoqalem, "'twas a snare
Of reason in disguise—
A foolish snare beyond compare
That taught me all the world was fair,
And sought to make me wise;

"For now I see both here and there
The Power that never dies,
For here and there and everywhere
All Love and Truth are Lies

"Yea," said Tsoqalem, "now I see
The promise and the prize
Of slaughter are the gifts of thee!"
And thus he shouted in his glee
And praise of Wonder-Eyes—

"'Twas human meat thou gavest me"
To do as I'd devise;—
Oh! thus—and thus I now thank thee,
And smite thee in this wise"

TSOQALEM

And in his hand he took a stone
And brast it into twain,
And beat the Monster frown and crown,
And clove him to the brain . . .

And came once more into his own
And scoured the woods again;
And when the wolves came howling down,
He howled them back amain!

And as he went he made this lay:

"The meat is raw before ye slay;
So eat it raw as well ye may,
For hungry folk can eat alway,—
O Ulka . . .

Nor might nor right shall conquer me
As tall as one and strong as three;
And thus—oh! thus I now thank thee,
O Ulka! . . ."

And naught did he by night nor day
But wrong and might would dare,
Chanting aloud that monstrous lay,
The Song of Human Fare!

THE BALLAD OF

CANTO VIII.

How the girl's stress of mind as well as her inability to rejoin Tsoqalem leads to her madness, and earns for her at the last a traditional indulgence ; of her conduct, apparently inspired ; and of the signs which Qaiyakwetsten mistakes for those of wisdom.

NAY, but a tithe may I set down
Of this, howe'er I fail
To sink the memory and drown
The thought within the tale

Of how Tsoqalem loud in laud
Of gracious things, pardie!
'Twixt day and dawning, fanged and clawed
In hairy armory,
Inhabited the Beast which gnawed
Its meat in infamy;

TSOQALEM

Of how perfidious night betrayed
Her vivid thought released
In speech of dreams, and how the maid
Called wildly on Tsoqalem's aid
To save her from the Beast;—

These hateful things, which are not food
But poison in the main,
I shall not tell, nor if I could
I would not tell again.

Not of these things,—the less that now
Pale Dawn is overhead,
To whom in happiness we bow
When horrid Night hath fled,—
Less how these lovers died, than how
The Night gave up her dead.

* * * *

The poor maid lay upon her bed
Of plank beside the wall
Of cedar, bullrush for the head,
With goat-and-dogwool blanket spread
To keep and cover all.

THE BALLAD OF

And when she waked in wandering mood
And told them all her rue,
Of how she ranged the tangled wood
And found Tsoqalem true,
And later met the Beast,—they stood
And mocked her for a shrew.

And, later, where the women wove
The wool for blanketing,
They asked, her would she weave, or rove?
Or sing a song of treasure-trove?
Or other ribald thing.

Till soon she cowered in disgrace,
And went in deadly fear
Of their disport, and hid her face
And wept, and had no cheer.

Ah! many times the hapless maid
Had thought to flee her woe—
To flee and seek Tsoqalem's aid,
Who would not treat her so.

TSOQALEM

And as she went, and wept, and pined
From day to day, there came
A gentle madness in her mind
To mitigate her shame.

And she would dig for clams, and bring
Them one by one, and make
Remark on every trivial thing,
And weep for happiness, and sing
As though her heart would break.

Or, she would chase the running tide
To cull the briny yeast;
But when a wave upsprang she cried
Most fearfully and ran to hide,
As though she fled the Beast!

And now this folk who saw the dream
Of madness in her mind,
Indulged and held her in esteem,
According to their kind,

THE BALLAD OF

And hearkened when in dreams she cried
Upon the Beast; or stood
And told as though she prophesied
Tsoqalem was grown good,
What time he prayed and purified
And fasted in the wood.

And oftentimes she sat to scan
The portents of the skies;
And Qaiyakwetsten, medicine-man,
Would nod his head upon his plan
And deem the maiden wise.

At last she told the shaman this:
"And is thy spirit dumb,
Who canst not read the signs amiss?—
Lo! for my time is come!"

Wherefore he told her that his plan
With time was ripened too;
He, Qaiyakwetsten, medicine-man,
Would show what he would do.

TSOQALEM

And calling loud before all folk:
"This maid and I will go
And seek Tsoqalem now!"—he spoke
Of what he could not know.

And afterward: "Take down and bind
The mats, and build a feast
Against our coming when the wind
Is south and sun is east . . ."
Went maid and shaman forth to find
Tsoqalem—him, the Beast!



THE BALLAD OF

CANTO IX.

How Tsoqalem's mother chooses to make ready against
the return of her son ; of the awe which her doings
inspire ; and of what grievous thing the occasion brings
forth.

AND now a woman took a stick--
A clam-stick sharp and strong,
And smote as she would drive a pick,
And dug both deep and long.

And when some asked her what she did,
'And why she never ceased
Digging at feast-time . . . "Feast forbid!"
Quoth she. "Said ye a feast?"

TSOQALEM

"A feast in plenty! Hast not heard
The order of the day,
And how the shaman spake the word
For feast?" And she said, "Nay—

"For I am deaf as deaf can be,
Oh, deaf and blind I am!
But dumb I am not yet," quoth she
"A shaman for his shamanry,
A clam-stick for a clam!"

"So-so!" cried one, "but thou shouldst dig
For clams along the shore!"—
"I dig," quoth she, "where clams are big,
For one, and not a score!"

And round the jokers turned to go,
And whispered, "Let her be!"
And fleered and jeered again, but lo!
They laughed not merrily.

THE BALLAD OF

For now, according to her plan,
Tsoqalem's mother, slave
Of Qaiyakwetsten, medicine-man,
'Twas she who dug his grave.

As well she knew the day and hour,
So well did she devise—
Who more than she who had the Power—
That Power which never dies.

And oh! she sent her spirit forth
To bring her of the best;
And lo! the wind was in the north,
The sun was in the west!

And half the night upon her bed
The woman sat and whined:
"There's coming in the smoke," she said,
"And coming in the wind!"

TSOQALEM

Ever she crooned of coming come,
Who would not show them more;
But made a sign of hush-and-dumb,
And pointed to the door.

And many laughed who would not treat
Her wisely, but in scorn
Till distart pattering which beat
Upon the wind was borne
Upon their cavilling sense, to meet
And sweep their laughter from its feet,
And prove them all forsworn.

And every ear was tuned to hear,
And every pulse to beat,
And every sense was live with fear
To hear those running feet.

And every eye was on the door—
That square of sapphire-blue
Framed in the glare on wall and floor
The flaming logwood threw.

THE BALLAD OF

And oh! in truth I think no shame
Of him who called the feast,
As from that door the shaman came
His length among them, torn and lame,
And after him—the Beast!

For there were others of a ring
Who had no thought of scare
To see so dread a happening,
Who cringed and cowered there;
And shrank to hear Tsoqalem sing
The Song of Human Fare.

Though tongues were clamouring into speech,
And all was wild with strife,
Lo! not a brave had wit to reach
A bow, nor draw a knife

He crouched and, slouching from the hips,
Caught up two flaming brands;
And lo! with blood upon his lips
And blood upon his hands,

TSOQALEM

Tsoqalem stood beyond compare
Of reason or disguise
A kind of Man, a kind of Bear,
With wolfish teeth and wolfish hair,
And claws, and dreadful eyes!

And then he flung upon them all
And beat them where they stood,
Till fire was creeping up the wall—
The wall of cedar-wood,
Which burnt no fiercer than the call
Of fire within his blood.

He loomed a Monster in the smoke
Which murdered in its rage,
What time he fired and fought and broke
Upon his heritage.

At last the heinous work was done,
For many now were fled;
And of the rest was left but one
Alive among the dead.

THE BALLAD OF

That one, according to her plan,
Tsoqalem's mother, slave
Of Qaiyakwetsten, medicine-man,
Was she who'd dug his grave.

The Monster turned, and at that dread
Impulsive act she sprang—
Who lay as dead upon her bed—
And flung a clam-stick o'er his head
And bore him to the ground.

Quick as a cat, with ruth nor reck,
She caught him in his breath,
Clutching the stick about his neck,
And called upon his death.

And writhing thus and rolled about:
"Oh, kill him!" then she cried
And there came those who lurked without,
And smote him that he died.

* * * *

TSOQALEM

At grievous dawn went folk who found
The maid Tsoqalem smote
To death—at rest upon the ground,
Washed in the morning-dews; and bound
Some grass . . . about the throat . . .

And all about the sward was black
With stress of strife and stride . . .
Full gently then they bore her back
That was Tsoqalem's bride.



THE BALLAD OF

CANTO X.

Of the squaw who told this tale, and of the hatit of
my mind.

AND so she told the story Nay,
For all she might be brave
I liked her not, and went my way;
But as I went I heard that lay:
"The meat is raw before ye slay—"
That hateful Song of Ulka

But thus it went—and well it may,
As Christ my soul shall save:
"There was no feast to make us gay,
But there was many a stick that day
Which helped to dig a grave!"

TSOQALEM

Oh! but a tithe have I set down
Of this—howe'er I fail
To ease my memory, and drown
The thought within the tale!



NOTES

§ Those who may desire to refer to the original prose version of this story will find it in the Report upon the Native Tribes of the South Eastern Portion of Vancouver Island, by Charles Hill-Tout F.R.S.C., published in the Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, London.

NOTE ON PRONOUNCIATION OF INDIAN NAMES

TSOQALEM : accent the second syllable, and sound the 'a' as in 'tale'.

QAIYAKWETSTEN : accent the first and third syllables, the 'ai' to have the sound of 'i' as in 'ilke.'

ULKA : sound the 'u' as in 'dull'.

The 'q' (not followed by 'u') is used to represent a sound the equivalent of a very guttural 'k'.

'HAIYAKO' : Canto VI., verse 2, 'Goodbye'.



