



THE LIFE OF AN INDIAN WOMAN.

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THE life of the average Indian woman is one filled with hardships and privations. This statement is more particularly true of all tribes other than the Sioux. These latter Indians treat their wives with considerable respect, and, consequently, the Sioux girl, maiden or mother, is more interesting to us.

If one should write down the everyday doings of an Indian woman for a month, a very fair idea would be obtained of her life, for the doings of each day are but a repetition of the day before.

About seven o'clock in the morning, when the sun is sufficiently high to gild the smoky canvas lodges with its beams, the Sioux woman arises. She picks up several pots and pans, and, if it be winter, kindles a fire in the centre of the lodge; she fills a kettle with water, suspends it above the fire, and places therein a compound of wild cherries, rice and meat. She fills the coffee-pot, and as soon as the singing steam indicates that the fluid is about prepared, she calls to her lord and the children, who, lazily and with evident regret, dress themselves and partake of

person. Boys and girls play alike together until they have attained the age of about ten years, then there is a separation, and the girls romp about the tepees, while the boys gather on the banks of the neighbouring stream and sport about the water, or throw spears and shoot arrows at marks. Their games are totally different from those indulged in by an ordinary boy.

When a girl has attained the age of ten years, she is instructed to some extent by her mother in the art of cooking and taking care of either a tepee or a log-house. At the age of fifteen she has quite a voice in the family, and is permitted to vote upon questions of importance. She is not compelled to work unless the task meets with her approval. Indeed, until her marriage, the young lady has unlimited liberty, even more so than the more cultured and refined miss of civilised communities. When she becomes a young woman the prettiest dresses are procured for her—for very few Indians nowadays wear buckskin—and a beautiful and bright-coloured blanket is presented her by her father. She wears a broad leather belt about her waist, ornamented with silver pieces, frequently quarters and half dollars. Her moccasins and leggings are a marvel of artistic workmanship, often being covered with several pounds of beads. Her hair is parted in the centre, combed straight back, and the parting is painted invariably a bright yellow. Formerly, necklaces of bear teeth and claws were worn, but now beads of European manufacture take the place of such savage ornaments. The children may wear necklaces of elk teeth or wolf teeth, both of which are highly esteemed, but the young lady does not deign to thus ornament herself. She frequently paints her cheeks yellow, and occasionally a bright red. She wears a blanket thrown over both shoulders, with one corner thrown about her head so that the face only is visible, somewhat after the manner employed by the ancient Romans in wearing a toga. The young girls are quite shy, and many of them are a model of propriety. They would think no more of conversing with a total stranger, whether he be red or white, than would any young lady regard the rude stare of some passing dude.

The girl has a perfect right to accept or refuse a young man's attentions, whether he be a chief's son or an ordinary warrior.

Indian men do not usually obtain their wives by barter. Formerly this custom was in vogue, but of late years it has

concludes by asking her to become his squaw. If she favours the suit, she communicates to her parents and goes away with him; if not, she jokes him, and laughs at his words and leaves him disconsolate. Frequently three or four young men will go to see the same young lady upon the same evening. They are very gentlemanly and courteous, however, and each waits patiently until the young man who first came has tried his persuasive power. Strange to say, there is no rivalry or jealousy; that a young woman should have a number of admirers is taken as a matter of course; and, although those in waiting may inwardly rejoice at the maiden's refusal to listen to the words of their rivals, there is no outward indication visible. The young girls being free from the odious duties that devolve upon the women, have specially bright and vivacious countenances. The married woman of thirty looks still young, although her voice has a certain hardness, or sternness. The woman of forty shows wrinkles and furrows in her features. There is a sadness in her face, and, if one looks closely, you can read the following story:—'My husband sits in his lodge and smokes most of the time. Once a week, when cattle are issued at the beef corral, he goes out with me in our waggon and shoots a cow. I have to cut up the animal, remove the skin, and put the meat in the waggon, while he sits idly by, regarding my work complacently. He may aid me in lifting the heavier pieces, but when we get home the preparing of certain portions to be dried devolve wholly upon me. I have to cut most of the wood, bring the water and make trips to the agency store two or three miles distant for provisions. On ration day, when flour, beans, rice and meal are issued, I go to the commissary department with the dawn of day and stand in line with four or five hundred other women several hours, patiently waiting the opening of the doors. When I receive my heavy load of provisions there is no one to help me carry them back home except my children.' And while the woman told you this you would feel very sorry for her, but when she told you, with proud and haughty bearing, her reason for not permitting her lord to assist her, you would lose your sympathy:—'To you white people this is dreadful; to us it is right. My husband is a warrior (or a chief, or medicine man), and it is degrading for him to do woman's work. I would no more think of asking him to aid me in the ordinary duties, than your husbands would think of asking their wives to aid them in their business, or at their offices. My sphere is entirely different from his, and while it is hard work, it is a labour of love.'

The missionaries on the reservation find it extremely difficult to infuse European ideas into the minds of the Sioux, especially regarding the treatment of women. While the men are perfectly willing to have their girls educated, they will not consent to have them placed on an equality with the men. Thus alone can change this prejudice and raise Sioux women from their low condition to that high and noble position such as is attained and held by women of civilized nations. A woman compelled to toil as a slave, appeals to no sentiment in a man's nature save that of pity and compassion. Education and Christianity alone can elevate them.



the morning meal. They eat, of course, with their fingers, cutting the meat with a butcher's knife. This very same knife may have been used to cut up a cow at the beef-issuè the day previous, or to prepare a fat puppy for the skillet.

While they partake of their frugal repast, let us glance about the home of these people. Take, for example, the lodge of Keeps the Battle. We observe a framework of poles covered with heavy canvas or duck. The structure is eleven feet in diameter at the base, and there is an opening at the top about two feet wide, to admit of the passage of smoke, and for ventilation. The edges of the opening at the top are irregular, and pieces of canvas will flop in the wind, sending considerable soot both into the food and upon the inmates below, neither of which disturbs them, for they are used to it. Several sticks are tied across from one pole to another at about the height of an average man, from which are suspended long, thin strips of beef, to be slowly cured in the heat of the fire. The thin strips of jerked beef look very uninviting to the white man, and are really suggestive of raw hide rope. The pot is suspended over the fire on a curved stick, which is firmly planted in the ground, and covers over the blaze. Similar contrivances are used frequently by gipsies, although wandering folk frequently prefer an ordinary crane. At the base of the lodge are blankets and robes piled in confusion around the edges. They serve as seats during the day, and as a covering at night. They are seldom aired, but on account of the wind having free access to them, both from above and below, they have no odour.

Many of the Sioux live in log houses, although a large portion still adhere to the canvas and skin lodges.

Indian children are never named until several years of age. Not infrequently is their naming postponed till something unusual has happened in the history of the young

fallen into disuse. A father may accept a number of horses and blankets as a mark of respect from him who marries his daughter, just as we erect a fine house, or give valuable wedding presents to our young people when they marry. It is in no sense a purchase or a sale on either part.

To me, one of the customs of courting is very strangely in keeping with the wild, yet romantic, life of the Sioux. A young man desiring to make love to the lady of his choice, works patiently for several days and constructs a reed flute. There are five or six holes in the instrument, and eight or ten notes can be produced upon it. The sound is weird and plaintive. Some beautiful moonlight night, about eight o'clock, the young man leaves his home, and stationing himself about one hundred yards from the home of his intended, plays for one or two hours a series of strange melodies, all of them in the minor key. The sound floats out on the summer air, and, perhaps, a prairie dog on the plain nearby, disturbed by the music may raise his small voice in protesting barks; or, a great white owl, in a screech, may hoot and whoop in derision. The sound is as sweet to the maiden's ears as the voice of the lover himself. She listens attentively, and when she concludes that he has played sufficiently long to assure her of his serious intentions, she timidly walks forth from her home. Throwing the now useless reed upon the ground, the young man rushes forth. Then ensues a scene such as only those who have been lovers can appreciate.

Another means of courting, although not so generally followed, is very peculiar and deserves mention. The young man goes and stations himself near the home of the one he most highly esteems, and awaits her coming. When she appears, he goes up to her and assures her of his high regard for her. He may converse ten or fifteen minutes and



BAGATELLE BALLAD.

MY LOVE OF LONG AGO.

THERE are faces just as perfect,
There are eyes as true and sweet,
There are hearts as strong and tender
As the heart that's ceased to beat;
There are voices just as thrilling,
There are souls as white, I know,
As hers were when she went from me—
My love of long ago.

New lips are ever telling
The tale that ne'er grows old;
Life's greys are always changing
For someone into gold;
But amid the shine and shadow,
Amid the gloom and glow,
She walks with me, she talks with me—
My love of long ago.

When I think of all the changes
That the changing years have brought,
I am glad the world that holds her
Is the world that changes not.
And the same as when she left me
She waits for me, I know,
My love on earth, my love in heaven,
My love of long ago.