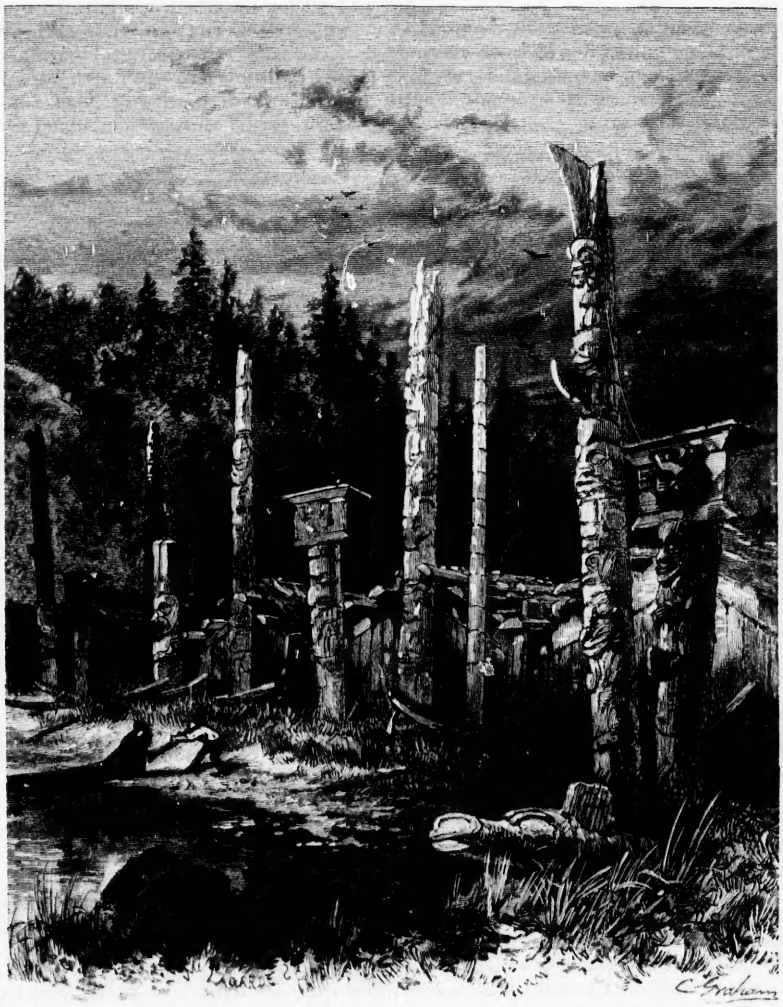


A HAIDA VILLAGE.

THE HAIDAS.

LEAVING Victoria, Vancouver Island, on the 27th of May, 1878, in the little schooner *Wanderer*, of twenty tons burden, we steered northwestward for the Queen Charlotte Islands; and judging our craft not sufficiently sea-worthy for the rough outer coast of Vancouver Island, exposed to the full sweep of the great North Pacific, we were obliged to voyage by the inner channels and wonderful series of connecting fiords which characterize the coast of British Columbia, and ramify among its half-submerged mountain ranges.

Channels like these, however well adapted for steam navigation, and wonderfully picturesque and grand though they are, are tedious enough for sailing vessels. The wind blows generally either directly up or down the channel, shut in by its mountain walls, and what with calms and the rapid and constantly changing tidal current, we spent many a weary hour at anchor, or even retro-

gressing. Sixteen days thus occupied, however, brought us to Melbank Sound, whence, abandoning the idea of visiting first the north end of the islands, we lay across for their southern extremity. In making the traverse of eighty miles we were first becalmed, and then, not without some discomfort and danger, weathered half a gale from the northwestward, and on the 12th of June completed our voyage of nearly five hundred miles by casting anchor between the silent wooded shores of a cove in Stewart Channel, which separates Prescott and Moresby islands.

ECHO HARBOR, QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS.

Along the coast of British Columbia the Indians are almost exclusively fishermen. They engage in the chase to a very limited extent, and seldom venture far into the dense forests, of which they appear often to entertain a superstitious dread, peopling them in imagination with monsters and fearful inhabitants. While some of these tribes are still little improved, or have even deteriorated from their original condition, others are moderately industrious, and apply themselves to work in various ways.

Of the tribes inhabiting the coast, the Haidas are in many respects the most interesting. The Queen Charlotte Islands, which they possess, are separated by wide water stretches from the archipelago fringing the coast of the mainland of British Columbia to the north, and from the southern extremity of Alaska to the northwest. They form a compact group, and it is perhaps to their comparative isolation and homogeneity that we owe the fact that the Haidas, while remarkably distinct from most other tribes of the coast, are in language and customs so nearly the same in all parts of their own territory. The extreme length of the Queen Charlotte Islands is one hundred and eighty miles, with a greatest breadth of sixty miles.

During Captain Cook's last voyage in the Pacific it was discovered that a lucrative trade in furs might be opened between the northwestern coast of America and China, and though the existence of a part of the Queen Charlotte Islands had been known to the Spaniards since the voyage of Juan Peraz in 1774, it is to the traders who followed in the track of Cook that we owe most of the earlier discoveries on this part of the coast, and it is they who first appear to have come in contact with the Haidas.

Toward the beginning and during the earlier years of the present century the Queen Charlotte Islands were not infrequently visited by trading vessels. The sea-otter, however—the skins of which were the most valuable articles of trade possessed by the islanders—having become very scarce through continuous hunting, few vessels but mere coasters have called at any of the ports for many years back.

The islands have lain, too, on one side of the traffic to Alaska and the northern part of British Columbia, which of late years has assumed considerable proportions.

The earliest notice of the Haidas which I have been able to find is that given in Captain Dixon's narrative, and bears date July, 1787. Dixon first made the land of the islands near their northwestern extremity, in the vicinity of North Island, and gives in the narrative of his voyage a detailed account of his meeting and intercourse with the natives, and his trade with them for furs.

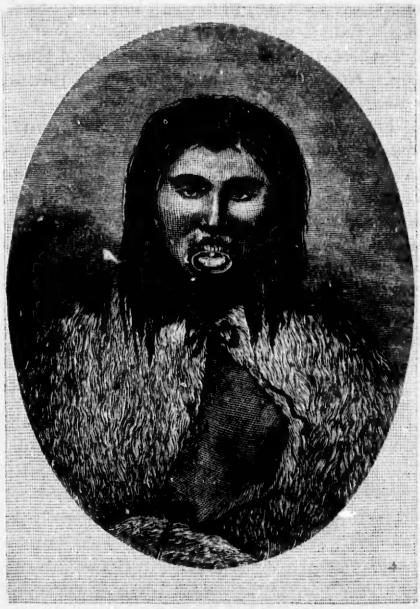
When first visited by whites, the population of the islands probably exceeded 7000; at the present day it is about 2000, including in this number many who, while now living elsewhere on the coast, still call the islands their home.

The climate of the Queen Charlotte Islands is excessively humid, and they are almost everywhere covered with magnificent coniferous trees. Mountains 4000 to 5000 feet high rise in their central portion, and they are penetrated on all sides by dark deep fiords with rocky walls.

To the northeast, it is true, a wide stretch of low and nearly level country occurs, which may some day support a farming population, but at the present time its sombre woods, filled with dense undergrowth, and barricaded with prostrate trunks in every stage of decay, offer little to induce either Indian or white to penetrate them. The Haidas, therefore, though cultivating here and there along the shores small potato patches, are essentially fishermen. Few paths or trails traverse the interior of the islands, and of these some formerly used when the population was greater are now abandoned.

The halibut is found in great abundance in the vicinity of the islands, and it is more particularly on this fish that the Haidas depend. Their villages are invariably situated along the shore, often on bleak, wave-lashed parts of the coast, but always in proximity to productive halibut banks. Journeys are made in canoe along the coast. The canoes are skillfully hollowed from the great cedar-trees of the region, which, after being worked down to a certain small thickness, are steamed and spread by the insertion of cross-pieces till they are made to assume a most graceful form, and show lines which would satisfy the most fastidious ship-builder. In their larger canoes the Haidas do not hesitate to make long voyages on the open sea; and in former days, by their frequent descents on the coast of the mainland, and the facility with which they retreated again to their own islands, they rendered themselves more dreaded than any tribe from Vancouver to Sitka.

CHIEFS OF THE HAIDA INDIANS.



HAIDA GIRL.

In their mode of life, and the ingenuity and skill they display in their manufacture of canoes and other articles, the Haidas do not differ essentially from the other tribes inhabiting the northern part of the coast of British Columbia and Southern Alaska. In the Queen Charlotte Islands, however, the peculiar style of architecture and art elsewhere among the Indians of the west coast more or less prominently exhibited, appears to attain its greatest development. Whether this may show that to the Haidas or their ancestors the introduction of this is due, or indicate merely that with the greater isolation of these people, and consequent increased measure of security, the particular ideas of the Indian mind were able to body themselves forth more fully, we may never know. The situation of the islands, and the comparative infrequency with which they have been visited for many years, have at least tended to preserve intact many features which have already vanished from the customs and manufactures of most other tribes.

As before stated, the permanent villages of the Haidas are invariably situated at the sea-shore. They consist generally of a single long row of houses, with but a narrow grassy border between it and the beach, on which the canoes of the tribe (for each village constitutes a chieftaincy) are drawn up. In front of each house stands a symbolical carved post, while other carved posts, situated irregularly, and differing somewhat in form from those proper to the houses, are generally memorials to the dead. Such a village, seen from a little distance off, the houses and posts gray with the weather, resembles a strip of half-burned forest with dead "rampikes." The little cloud of smoke from the various fires may, however, serve to indicate its true character.

The general type of construction of houses with the Indians of this part of the northwest coast is everywhere nearly the same, but among the Haidas they are more substantially framed, and much more care is given to the fitting together and ornamentation of the edifice than is elsewhere seen. The houses are rectangular, and sometimes over forty feet in length of side. The walls are formed of planks split by means of wedges from cedar logs, and often of great size. The roof is composed of similar split planks or bark, and slopes down at each side, the gable end of the house—if such an expression may be allowed—facing the sea, toward which the door also opens.

The door is usually an oval hole cut in the base of the grotesquely covered post, forty or fifty feet high, which we may call the totem post, but which to the Haidas is known as *kechen*. Stooping to enter, one finds that the soil has been excavated in the interior of the house so as to make the actual floor six or eight feet lower than the surface outside. You descend to it by a few rough steps, and on looking about observe that one or two large steps run round all four sides of the house. These are faced with cedar planks of great size, which have been hewn out, and serve not only as shelves on which to store all

CARVED WOODEN DISH.

the household goods, but as beds and seats if need be. In the centre of a square area of bare earth the fire burns, and it will be remarkable if some one of the occupants of the house be not engaged in culinary operations thereat. The smoke mounting upward passes away by what we may call a skylight—an opening in the roof, with a shutter to set against the wind, and which serves also as a means of lighting the interior. One is surprised to find what large beams have been employed in framing the house. There are generally four of these laid horizontally, with stout supporting uprights at the ends. They are neatly hewn, and of a symmetrical cylindrical form, and are generally fitted into the hollowed ends of the uprights. The uprights are often about fifteen feet high, with a diameter of about three feet; and it is only when we become acquainted with the fact that a regular *bee* is held at the erection of the house that we can account for the movement without machinery of such large logs. The bee is accompanied by a distribution of property on the part of the man for whom the house is being built, well known on the west coast by the Chimook name *potlatch*. Such a house as this accommodates several families, in one sense of the term, each occupying a certain corner or portion of the interior.

We must return, however, to the carved posts, which constitute the most distinctive feature of a Haida village. To make one of these a large and sound cedar-tree —probably three or four feet in diameter —is chosen somewhere not far from the water's edge, felled, trimmed, and then moved down to the sea. Being launched, it is towed to the village site, and by united labor dragged up on the beach above high-water mark. It is then shaped and carved, some of the Indians being famous for their skill in this business, and earning considerable sums by practicing it. The log is hollowed behind, like a trough, to make it light, while the front is generally covered with a mass of grotesque figures, in which the animal representing the totem, or clan, of the person for whom it is made takes a prominent place. It constitutes, in fact, his coat of arms, and may in some instances be gayly painted. When all is finished the post is taken to its place, and firmly planted in the ground, to remain a thing of beauty till, under the influence of the climate, it becomes gray with age and hoary with moss and lichen.

The peculiar type of art most fully displayed on the carved posts is found more or less in all the manufactures of the Haidas. The neat and even elegant wooden dishes which formerly served all household purposes embody always some peculiar animal form or grouping of forms more or less complicated or contorted. Though the artist may be able to copy nature faithfully enough when he tries, as witnessed in some of the masks used in dancing, he in most cases prefers to follow certain conventional ideas which appear by long usage to have become incorporated with the native mind.

Not the least curious of the customs of the Haidas, and probably with some religious significance, are those connected with dancing ceremonies. These appear to be divided into six classes, which are designated by as many barbarous names, not necessary here to mention. Of these I have been fortunate enough to see one, the *Kwai-o-guns-o-lung*, a description of which, given nearly as written down at the time, may serve to illustrate a class of performances once common among the native peoples, but which have now almost everywhere passed away.

Landing after dark from our boat at the southern end of the fine sandy beach on which Skidegate village fronts, we found this part of the town apparently quite deserted, but could discern a dim glow of light at a distance, and distinguish the monotonous sound of the drum. Scrambling as best we might in the dark by the path which zigzags along the front of the row of houses, and narrowly escaping falls over various obstacles, we reached the house in which the dance was going on. Pushing open the door, a glare of light flashed out, which had previously been seen only as it filtered through the various crevices of the house; and entering, we found ourselves behind and among the dancers, who stood within the house with their backs to the front wall. Edging through them, we crossed the open space in which the fire, well supplied with resinous logs, was burning, and seated ourselves on the floor amidst a crowd of on-lookers at the further end.

The house was of the usual oblong shape, the floor being covered with cedar planks, with the exception of a square

space in the centre for the fire, and the goods and chattels of the family piled here and there in heaps along the walls, leaving the greater part of the interior clear.

The audience was arranged along the sides and at the further end, filling almost every available space, squatting in various attitudes on the floor, and consisting of men, women, and children of all ages. The smoke of the fire escaped by wide openings in the roof, without causing any inconvenience, and its glow brightly illuminated the faces and forms of all present. The performers, in this instance about twenty in number, were dressed according to no uniform plan, but attired in their best clothes, or at least their most showy ones, with the addition of certain ornaments and badges appropriate to the occasion. All, or nearly all, wore head-dresses, variously constructed of twisted cedar bark, and ornamented with feathers, or, as in one case, with a bristling circle of the whiskers of the sea-lion. Shoulder girdles made of cedar bark, colored, or ornamented with tassels, were very common. One man wore leggings covered with fringes of puffin beaks strung together, which rattled as he moved. Many, if not all, held sprigs of fresh spruce in the hand, and were covered about the head with downy feathers, which also floated in abundance in the warm air of the house. Some had rattles, and added to the din by shaking these furiously at the accentuated parts of the song. Five women took part in the dance, standing in front in a row, and were dressed with some uniformity, several having the peculiarly valuable cedar-bark or goat's-wool shawls made by the Tshimsiens. The head-dresses of the women were all alike, consisting in each case of a small mask or semblance of a face carved neatly in wood, and inlaid with pearly haliotis shell. These, attached to a cedar-bark frame, and trimmed with gay feathers and tassels, stood before the forehead, while at the back in some cases depended a train with ermine skins. The faces of both men and women engaged in the dance were gayly painted, vermilion being the favorite color.

The performer on the drum—a flat tambourine-like article formed of hide stretched on a hoop—sat opposite the dancers and near the fire, so that they could see each other's movements. The drum was beaten very regularly with double knocks—thus, *tum tum, tum tum, tum tum*—and with the sound the dancers kept time in a sort of chant or song, to which words are set, and which swells into a full chorus or dies away, according to the notions of a leader who stood among the dancers, who, besides marking time, now and then gave a few words of direction or exhortation.

To the drumming and singing the dancing also keeps time, following it very closely. At every beat a spasmodic twitch passes through the crowd of dancers, who scarcely lift their feet from the floor, but move by double jerks, shuffling the feet a little at the same time. After the performance has continued for ten minutes or so the master of the ceremonies gives a sign, and all suddenly stop, with a loud *hugh!* The dance is resumed by the perspiring crowd at the signal of the drum, which strikes up after a few moments' rest has been allowed.

The crowd of gayly painted, gayly dressed savages, by the kind light of the fire, presented, on the whole, a rather brave and imposing appearance, and when excited in the dance the Haida may yet almost imagine the grand old days to remain when hundreds crowded the villages now occupied by tens, and nothing had eclipsed the grandeur of their ceremonies and doings.

Of stories connected with localities, or accounting for various circumstances, there are no doubt very many among the Haidas. Of these a few have been collected. The fundamental narrative of the origin of man and the beginning of the present state of affairs is the most important of their myths.

Very long ago, they say, there was a great flood, by which all men and animals were destroyed, with the exception of a single raven. This creature was not, however, exactly an ordinary bird, but—as with all animals in the old Indian stories—possessed the attributes of a human being to a great extent. His coat of feathers, for instance, could be put on or taken off at will like a garment. The name of this being was Ne-kil-stlas.

When the flood had gone down, Ne-kil-stlas looked about, but could find neither companions nor a mate, and became very lonely. At last he took a cockle-shell from the beach, and marrying it, he still continued to brood and

think earnestly of his wish for a companion. By-and-by in the shell he heard a very faint cry like that of a newly born child, but which gradually became louder, till at last a little female child was seen, which, growing by degrees larger and larger, was finally married by the raven, and from this union all the Indians were produced, and the country peopled.

The people, however, had many wants, and as yet had neither fire, light, fresh-water, or the oolachen fish. These things were all in the possession of a great chief or deity called Setlin-ki-jash, who lived where the Nasse River now is. Water was first obtained by Ne-kil-stlas in the following manner. The chief had a daughter, and to her Ne-kil-stlas covertly made love, and visited her many times unknown to her father. The girl began to love Ne-kil-stlas very much, and trust in him, which was what he desired; and at length, when he thought the time ripe, he asked on one occasion for a drink of water, saying that he was very thirsty. The girl brought him the water in one of the closely woven baskets in common use for that purpose; but he drank only a little, and, setting the basket down beside him, waited till the girl fell asleep. Then quickly donning his coat of feathers, and lifting the basket in his beak, he flew out of the opening made for the smoke in the top of the lodge. He was in great haste, fearing to be followed by the people of the chief, and a little water fell out here and there, causing the numerous rivers which are now found; but in the Haida country a few drops only fell, like rain, and so it is that there are no large streams there to-day.

Ne-kil-stlas next wished to obtain fire, which was also in the possession of the same powerful being or chief. He did not dare, however, to appear again in the chief's house, nor did the chief's daughter longer show him favor. Assuming, therefore, the form of a single needle-like leaf of the spruce-tree, he floated on the water near the house; and when the girl—his former lover—came down to draw water, was lifted by her in the vessel she used. The girl, drinking the water, swallowed without noticing it the little leaf, and shortly afterward bore a child, who was no other than the cunning Ne-kil-stlas, who had thus again obtained an entry into the lodge. Watching his opportunity, he one day picked up a burning brand, and flying out as before by the smoke hole at the top of the lodge, carried it away, and spread fire everywhere.

Similar childish stories serve to explain the origin of light and the prized oolachen fish.

Ne-kil-stlas of the Haidas is represented in function and name by Us-tas of the Carries Tuineh. Of Us-tas an almost endless series of grotesque and often disgusting adventures are related, and analogous tales are repeated about Ne-kil-stlas.

The collection and study of details like these concerning the habits, customs, and thoughts of a people semi-barbarous, and disappearing even before our eyes in the universal menstruum of civilization, may seem to be of little importance. They lead, however, into a wide and interesting region of speculation, embracing the question of the origin and interrelation of the American aborigines, their wanderings, and all the unwritten pages of their history, which we can hope to know even by the most careful inquiry only in dim outlines.

We are led to ask ourselves in particular in regard to the Haidas, what has been the origin of the grotesque but highly conventionalized art which exhibits itself in many of the works of these people, and the social customs which, with a power almost as strong as that of fashion among ourselves, causes them to devote so much of their time to ceremonies apparently meaningless, but which serve to form the bonds and rough working machinery of society among them? Have these been those of a people who,

> "Flying, found shelter in the fortunate isles,
> And left their usages, their arts and laws,
> To disappear by a slow gradual death,
> To dwindle and to perish, one by one,
> Starved in those narrow bounds"?

or have they been developed slowly in a community separated from the human stock at a very early period? and might they, had they never been brought face to face with a superior power, have grown in the course of ages into an independent civilization like that of Mexico or Peru? We can never hope to answer such questions fully; but in regard to these people of the northwest coast we know that there are on record several instances in which Japanese junks, driven by the prevailing winds and currents, have been carried across the whole breadth of the North Pa-

cific, and that the passage across Behring Strait to the north is short, and is even occasionally at the present day made on the winter ice by the Esquimaux.

It is therefore more than probable that people with their rude arts may from time to time have been borne to the western coast of America, and that it is to Eastern Asia that we must look for the origin of its inhabitants.

A REBEL.

CAPTAIN MOORFIELD DRAKE, of the —th Massachusetts, came riding through the wood in a southerly direction. Through the trees on his right came the ruddy glow of the Virginian sun, now near its setting. It glistened intermittently upon the sleek flanks of his roan mare, and touched the rider's thin smooth cheek and brown mustache. Handsome and gallant he looked, this tall young officer; and no man in the regiment had a braver record or fairer prospects than he. His social qualities were fully on a level with his warlike ones. He was merry and good-humored; a teller of capital stories; a strict disciplinarian, yet popular with his men; an inexhaustible getter-up of and leader in all sorts of diversions to relieve the monotony of camp; a man whom all women were apt to like, even when their political sympathies were at variance with his; and a man who knew how to win a woman's heart gracefully, and perhaps with equal grace to leave it in the lurch, when the general commanding ordered a change of base. Such as he was, for good or evil, Captain Drake rode through the wood that April afternoon, until the trees thinned away, and a large rambling house, with a broad piazza and open windows, appeared on a slight elevation beyond. As he rode up to the door, and flung himself out of the saddle, the red rim of the sun vanished behind the western hill.

A negro led away his horse, and Captain Drake sprang up the steps of the piazza with a light foot. Before he reached the door, a slender figure dressed in white, with a blue sash round her waist, and a bow of the same color in her dark hair, made her appearance on the broad threshold. Moorfield Drake took both her hands in his, and looked smilingly into her eyes. Her eyes were blue, and had a certain gravity in their depths which remained even beneath the light of pleasure that now filled them. Drake's eyes were gray and very bright, with a commanding glance, and full of life and the enjoyment of it.

"Well, Mademoiselle Marie, were you expecting me?"

"No—well, yes; now that you are here, I think I did. Can you stay long?"

"Must be back by eight. I suppose you've heard the news? Are you glad, or sorry?"

"What news?"

"You don't know? You're only half a rebel. I'll wager Miss Madge has all the particulars at her tongue's end. If I were Lee, I'd have had her in the secret service long ago. She'd make an incomparable spy; make you believe black is white; and even if she were caught, no one would have the heart to execute her. How lovely you look this evening!"

"But what is this news? I am not lovely; I only— I don't believe Madge is so much of a rebel, as you call it, as I am. It's her way to say a hundred times more than she means, just for fun. And she's a hundred times lovelier than I am. But you haven't told me the news."

They had entered the large low-ceiled drawing-room, and had seated themselves on a wicker-work lounge between the windows. Drake sat with his hands clasped over the hilt of his sword, and his chin resting upon them. "Why, the news is," he said, "that your friend General Lee has suddenly taken it into his head to come in this direction; and consequently we may receive orders to march at any moment. So this may be my last call here for some time to come."

Herewith he fixed his eyes upon her face, and found no cause for disappointment in what he saw there. Sweet Marie Cranstoun had never been successful in dissimulation; truth and simplicity were at the foundation of her nature. And now the dismay and tremor at her heart showed themselves only too visibly in her delicate and sensitive features, and in the unconscious clasping of her hands upon her lap. Her lips parted tremulously, but she did not speak.

"Well, are you glad, or sorry?" repeated Captain Drake, with the impulse of a victor who exults in his security. "How soon do you mean to forget me?"

"Forget you!" echoed she. Then she felt that tears were coming to her eyes,