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## TOTEMISM

A BRIEF SKETCH OF THIS PECULIAR CUSTOM



**T**OTEMISM is the worship of the totems and is a peculiar social institution among the North American Indians. It is very curious in its character. In a great measure it is a religion of clans. Indian communities, independent of their local distribution into tribes, bands, and villages, are composed of several distinct clans. Each clan has its emblem, consisting of the figure of some bird, beast or reptile, and each is distinguished by the name of the animal which it thus bears as its device; as, for example, the clan of the Wolf, the Deer, the Otter, or the Hawk. In the language of the Algonquins these emblems are known by the name of "Totems."

The members of the same clan, being connected, or supposed to be so. By ties of kindred more or less remote, are prohibited from inter-marriage. Thus Wolf cannot marry Wolf, but he may, if he chooses, take a wife from the clan of Hawks, or any other clan but his own.

Totemism is both a religious and a social system. In its religious aspect it consists of the relations of mutual respect and protection between a man and his totem; in its social aspect it consists of the relations of the clansman to each other and to men of other clans. The