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INTERESTING FACTS

M. Leona Nichols recently published an article of more than ordinary interest to us, as it dealt with discoveries regarding Indians of the Columbia river basin, and we are pleased to reprint the following:

In the legends and stories of his religion, the redskin has woven tales that compare not unfavorably with those that have been handed down by the Greeks and Romans. Accounts almost paralleling those recorded in biblical history have been found supporting the Indian's belief in the existence of a supreme deity and the devil, as well as a clearly defined story of creation and the deluge. He believed in a future existence and in the efficacy of sacrifices to those gods whose wrath might have been invoked by sinful deeds.

While intelligent and civilized races do not grope for a concrete image of the supreme being, yet the mind of lesser intelligence demands something tangible. This fact would account for the stone images which have been found in the vicinity of the Columbia river.

The curator of ethnology at the National museum in Washington, D.C., is convinced that the tribes living in this vicinity made contacts with other Indians in very remote parts of the country. Pipes have been found belonging to the Minnesota and Pueblo sections, while shell objects and charms found among Indian belongings have been identified as coming from Alaska and California.

If the redskins bartered with other tribes, naturally he must know of the religion and beliefs of those with whom he came in contact. This may account somewhat for the general similarity between the Indian religions.

It is but natural that those things with which the Indian had daily contact should be woven into his legends. His gods were endowed with the power of turning men into stone. Examples of this are Pillar, Rooster and Beacon rocks.

The Coyote god of the Columbia river Indians gave them salmon for food, but not for barter. They recognized this fact, and the first of the spring run were allowed to pass to their spawning grounds. After the god's portion the Indian took his toll. The first fish caught were wrapped in garlands and placed on a brazier of glowing coals. While they were roasting,

sacred dances were in progress. When the process was complete the men feasted upon their portion, and after them the women and children.

After a time the spirit of graft wedged its way into the redskin's abode and the Indians took more fish from the river than they could use. These were bartered to other tribes for commodities which the piscatory Indians did not possess. This disobedience angered the Coyote god, so he decided to make an end of it. Standing on the top of Wind mountain, on the Columbia, he filled his cheeks with a mighty breath and blew on the river, destroying the greedy fishermen. Thus the salmon were saved from total destruction.

Memaloose island was a sacred burial place, not only for the Columbia river Indians, but for more remote tribes. The dead were placed either in a sitting posture or upon racks in the dead house. All of their belongings were left with them.

With the coming of the white man these graves were vandalized. One desecrator sacked a number of Indian skeletons for shipment. The captain of the steamboat that was to carry the cargo refused to accept the shipment unless it was properly labeled, so it was listed as "Nine Klickitats knocked down." The government would not countenance such an act of desecration and ordered said Klickitats returned to their burial place.

The mound builders in the southern part of the United States must have held the same belief in the existence of a happy hunting ground, for they, too, buried their dead together with all their belongings.

Numerous Indian tribes who lived in the Columbia river territory had similar burial rites. Some of them built a wall of fire around the grave of the departed. While the fire was burning they would howl loudly so as to attract the attention of the evil one and allow the spirit of the departed to reach the place of its future abode. Some of the oriental races have a similar ceremony and believe that noise will hold the attention of the devil until the spirit of the departed has passed out of reach.

According to George Himes, curator of the Oregon Historical society, who has been a close student of Indian life and customs, there is a definite relation-

(Continued on page 4)