

THE DREAMERS.

BY W. S. NELSON.

In the Big Bend of the Columbia, occupying about sixty miles up and down the river, dwells a band of Indians who are known far and wide by the appellation of "Dreamers." They are exclusive in their associations, and very few whites ever penetrate their domain; beautiful in its savage wildness, and awe inspiring in its solitude. They are a peculiar race, and their customs differ *in toto* from those of any of the surrounding tribes; they are wholly bound up in their religion, which is based on the occurrence herein related and which gave them the soubriquet, "Dreamers." It occurred about four years since; no one on this coast can have forgotten the thrilling night in 1872, the time of the great earthquake which was felt all over the Pacific coast, more or less severe. For some days before the earthquake a young Indian, not more than nineteen years of age, had been lying at the point of death at Whitestone, and for two days had lain in a trance showing scarcely a sign of life. When, at last he awoke, it was in the full enjoyment of all his faculties in mind and body, except in one side which had been peculiarly affected; the muscles were so drawn up that nothing could be done to relax them, and poor Quilasket was doomed to be a cripple for the rest of his life; but this was not all—while helay in the trance his soul had visited the realms of the Manitou and held converse in that beautiful land, with the great Father and angels of those happy hunting grounds. They had told him that his people were great sinners, and that they must change their ways or suffer early destruction; also many things he learned hitherto unknown to man, and the Manitou delegated him to go among his people and teach them as he was instructed.

It was a great fete day among the Moses and St. Paul (San Puel) Indians, and they were indulging in all manner of wild excesses. Great and small, comprising the whole people, had gathered on the banks of the beautiful Antipeacha, near where it flows into the great Columbia, and when the night drew on the wild whoops and the incessant beating of the *tom tom*, and the shrill unearthly songs started the eagle from his eyrie across the dashing waters, and the savage panther fled in affright from his lair in the neighboring wood to the left. The location was one peculiarly fitting such a savage festival—the rushing of the mighty waters of the great river, breaking its spray on the rocks glittered like a diamond and emerald mass in the bright silvery light of the moon; and on each side the banks rose up in great precipitous piles of granite, excepting the small level at the mouth of the Antipeacha; behind was a dense wood of towering pines grown close and whose gloomy depths were only the more forbidding and impenetrable on account of the brilliant illumination outside. In the midst of their wild orgies a single horseman came dashing through the darkness and reined up his foaming black steed in the very midst of the gaudily painted warriors and garland decked maidens. The noise was hushed in an instant on sight of the strange apparition. It was Quilasket; and, taking advantage of the order consequent on their surprise, he told them over again the tale of his visit and converse with the Great Invisible, and begged them to cease the sinful feast which they were celebrating and gain favor with the Manitou whose priest and prophet he was; and when again they began to jeer and laugh in

derision at his pious words he turned his horse's head toward the darkness of the forest, and with the words: "warriors, beware! The Manitou is angry with the wickedness of his people; you will dance no more when this night is half done;" was gone, once again into the darkness of the lonely mountain trail.

The night wore on, and, at midnight, the festival was at its height; but, suddenly, a rumbling noise drowned the din of their savage songs; the earth trembled beneath their feet; the great piles of granite fell and rolled in immense boulders among them; ere a moment had passed, hundreds of them lay crushed and mangled, and the festivities forever ended. When Quilasket came again, he came as a chief among them, and a prophet whose word was law; his power was established, and to this day, rules the remnant of the tribe. He has given them songs and prayers and a complete code of morals, by which they are compelled to abide. Every evening, when the twilight approaches, his disciples gather in a circle around the camp fire and chant in unison a long prayer, after which comes a dirge, sung in a minor key, and which contains some really fine musical effects, a requiem mass in memory of the eventful night when the prophet foretold their disaster—the earthquake. At the first peep of day, each morning the year around, this service is repeated, and they live in peace with themselves and the world about them, and hold the firm believe that they will pass to a land of spiritual beauty at the end of a certain period, which their prophet has named, (about eight years hence) when the world shall come to an end.

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