

recorded by these picturegraphs. Some are grotesque, some disgusting and some instructive, but whether they are orally related around the lodge fire, in the family circle or depicted in their carvings or rude paintings, the *dramatis personæ* are true transcripts of Indian life; they never rise above it, or express a sentiment or opinion which is not true to Indian society, nor do they employ words which are not known to their vocabulary. It is in these legends that we obtain their true views of life and death, their religion, their theory of the state of the dead, their mythology, their cosmogony, their notions of astrology, and often of their biography and history, for the boundaries between history and fiction are vaguely defined. Some of the ancient legends of the Haidas are prophetic, and told by these ancient skagas, or medicine men, to the Indians, then dressed in robes of furs. They were told of the strangers with white faces who would come and buy their furs and give them in exchange other articles of clothing and other kinds of food to eat, and they were warned to treat the strangers well when they came, as they would bring with them many things new and strange which would be of great benefit if they would learn and adopt what was good of the white men's ways. Schoolcraft says in his "Myth of Hiawatha:" These stories are often told, in seasons of great severity in the depth of the winter, to an eagerly listening group, to while away the hour and divert attention from the pressing claims of hunger. Under such circumstances to dole away time, which has no value to him, and to cheat hunger and want, is esteemed a trait of philosophy. If there is a morsel to eat in the lodge it is given to the children. The women imitate this stoicism and devotion of the men. Not a tone of the narrative tells of dismay in their domestic circumstances, not an eye acknowledges the influence of grief. The dignity of this position is worthy of remembrance. The man, it may be, shall pass away from the earth, but these tributes to the best feelings of the heart will remain, while these simple tales and legendary creations constitute a new point of character by which he should be judged. They are at least calculated to modify our views of the man, who is not always a savage, not always a fiend.

The Haidas seem to be advanced in their works of art in carvings in wood and stone, in silver, gold, copper and iron, and their carvings in the soft argillaceous slate stone, which is found among the coal measures of Skidegate, and worked by them into various shapes, such as caskets, plaques and miniature columns. Their bracelets, rings and ear ornaments of gold and silver, their copper shields and emblematic daggers, bows and arrows, and their iron daggers and war knives all richly carved, and their wooden and horn dishes, spoons, masks and toys are all eagerly sought after by tourists; and when properly explained and understood are of great value, for every carving has a meaning, and each illustrates a story or a legend, read and understood by the Indian as easily as the white man understands the printed book.

Marchand, a French navigator who visited Queen Charlotte Islands in 1791, says of them: "The taste

for ornament prevails in all the works of their hands; their canoes, their chests and different little articles of furniture in use among them are covered with figures which might be taken for a species of hieroglyphics; fishes and other animals, heads of men, and various whimsical designs, are mingled and confounded in order to compose a subject. It undoubtedly will not be expected that these figures should be perfectly regular and the proportions in them exactly observed, for here every man is a painter and sculptor, yet they are not deficient in a sort of elegance and perfection." * This taste for the fine arts seems to owe its origin to some ancient state of society which is lost to us in the obscurity of antiquity. Marchand, who had recently seen the Mexican sculpture and paintings, was of the opinion that the Haida works of art could be distinctly traceable to Aztec origin, an opinion with which my own observation has induced me to fully coincide.

The few illustrations I have given of the carvings and drawings of these interesting people may be of some future value in enabling the student and man of science to ascertain something of the truth concerning the origin of the Indians of the Northwest coast; and the Queen Charlotte Islands present a rich and hitherto but partially explored region, where the man of science may find much to add to our knowledge of the North American Indian, who in a comparatively brief period of time will wholly disappear as a distinctive race. JAMES G. SWAN.

AN EARLY WRITING PAPER.

MANY centuries before Christ, Numa left writings upon the papyrus, whence our name, paper, is derived. This plant, which was revered as sacred by the old Egyptians, grows abundantly in shallow streams and marshes in upper Egypt and Syria. Bruce found it growing in the River Jordan, and noticed a curious fact, that it always presented the sharp, angular side of its pear-shaped stem to the swift current. The stem is eight or ten feet high, two inches in diameter, and crowned with a fringe of hair-like leaves, which circle a blossom of slender spikelets. Beneath the brown sheath which envelops the root-stalk of this dark-green plant lie other sheaths which are very transparent. These, when split into thin leaves and dried in the sun, were glued together, and formed the roll of papyrus on which many of the ancient writings have come down to us. This paper was both flexible and durable. Specimens from Pompeii can be seen in the museum at Naples. In the fifth century papyrus paper, of which many varieties existed, was largely manufactured at Alexandria, and ranked high in the commerce of nations. Its use continued until about seven or eight centuries ago.—*St. Nicholas*.

A SQUAW refused to marry a Canadian Indian, and he took her scalp—a lock of her hair, as it were. She then married him, and it wasn't long before he hadn't hair enough for a scalp lock.

* Marchand's Voyages, vol. II. p. 282.