

THE WEST SHORE.

THIRTEENTH YEAR.

APRIL, 1887.

NUMBER 4.

MYTHS OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER INDIANS.



FEW years ago the Columbia river valley was inhabited solely by Indians and wild beasts. West of the Cascade mountains were a few isolated settlements, but the main country was an unbroken wild. Up and down the valley of the Willamette the Klikitats, Calipooias, Multnomahs, Yamhills, Molallahs, and a few smaller tribes, roamed unmolested. Along the Lower Columbia the Chinooks, a once powerful, but now almost extinct, tribe, held dominion, while east of the Cascades the Klikitats, Walla Wallas, Cayuses, Spokanes and Nez Percés held sway.

Of all these, the Klikitats were, perhaps, the most powerful and restless, making the widest excursions into the surrounding country. Over eighty years ago, Lewis and Clarke found them already living far out south in Oregon. Quite extensive villages of them were

found by the early settlers almost as far south as Eugene, and in Clackamas and Marion counties, also. In their trade excursions, or marauding expeditions, they penetrated far into California, while on the north they traversed a good portion of British Columbia, and every summer made expeditions into the "buffalo country," as they called the lands at the headwaters of the Missouri.

All these tribes are fast passing away, and soon will have gone into oblivion, and been numbered with the dead nations of antiquity. To the student of ethnology there is an attraction, almost amounting to fascination, in the study of the character, habits, myths, traditions and superstitions of this doomed and dying race. To everyone must have occurred, again and again, the questions "What was the Indian's origin? From whence did he come? What is his past history? Does he represent the last stage of degeneracy of a once more powerful and intelligent race, or has he always been the same as now?" Whatever we would know of him, we must soon discover, for very soon, in his primitive condition, he will be a thing of the past. Contact with the whites is corrupting, and fast obliterating, his cus-