

TALKING BY SIGNS.

UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE IS ONE OF MOTIONS.

Confucius, Rameese and Sitting Bull Might Carry on a Conversation—Though Not Speaking Same Tongue, Indians Can Understand Each Other.

There is an old story of the man who was too bashful to talk in company and who received from a friend the rude advice, "If you can't talk, make signs."

The American Indians are the greatest sign talkers now left in the world; or, perhaps more properly, it might be said that they were such until the advance of white civilization changed many of the requirements of their lives and thus altered many of their customs, thus among them.

er hill, and which in turn he might see answered from a different direction. It was the signal talk of the Indians, across miles of intervening ground, a signal used in rallying the warriors for an attack or warning them for a retreat when that seemed advisable.

Sometimes at night the settler or traveler saw fiery lines crossing the sky, shooting up and falling, perhaps taking a direction diagonal to the line of vision. He might guess that these were the signals of the Indians, but unless he were an old-timer he might not be able to interpret the signals.

hooked horns of the buffalo, and you knew what he meant. If he thrust both arms above his head, spread out, and with the fingers spread out, you saw the branching antlers of the elk unmistakably. The wolf sign, the first two fingers of each hand held close together and upright at each side of the head, indicated the erect ears of that animal plainly.

Yet others of the simpler signs are easy of comprehension by the man who is capable of casting off his customary habits of thought and trying to be a child again. Thus, we say a man is in doubt, he wavers mentally, he is shaken in his mind, he hesitates. When the Indian sees something strange to

UPON A CATARACT'S BRINK.

Thrilling Experience of a Voyager on the Ottawa River.

The horrible experiences of one who has been swept away by some merciless current and finds himself at last at the brink of a cataract may possibly be imagined, but there are few who survive to relate to us the particulars of such an ordeal. Yet there is one instance where a man was saved at the very edge of the falls.

There are few more imposing bits of scenery in Canada than where the Ottawa River pours thundering and foaming over the Chaudiere Falls.

In some places the water pours over in a dense and irresistible volume, while at other points a shallow stream will spray itself over a higher table of rock.

The man was busy forking these logs with those sharp tongs used to swing them about and draw them in, when he missed his footing and fell into the river. Though a strong swimmer, he could not withstand the current and was swept out into the stream and on toward the falls.

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ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE SIGNS OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN



the sign language, though some pick it up readily, just as certain persons learn foreign languages more readily than others. The sign talk was in all cases best used by whites who had been among the tribes from early youth.

To the "tenderfoot" who first went upon the plains in the old days there were some signs or marks which were early accepted as obvious or generally understood. Thus, he saw a slim pile of rocks upon the edge of some coulee or ravine.

The beginner on the plains learned other things, among these the fact that the plains were capable of vast distances, which could be traversed better by the eye than by the horse or by the weary human foot. A mile away he saw a horseman riding in a circle—a circle which would appear the same when seen from any direction. He did not know what this meant, but when he was told it said "Come ahead," he did not bother about riding over to the man he wanted to have come ahead.

The Indians used yet another sign to say "come ahead" when secrecy was necessary. This was made by taking hold of the lower part of the blanket or robe which one was wearing and holding it out from the body, then motioning with it in toward the legs—a sign as obvious as the beckoning hand, and visible at a greater distance.

The traveler upon the plains in the early days soon learned the significance of the spires of smoke which he sometimes saw rising from a distant ridge

my are too many for us." Two arrows shot up into the air at once meant, "We shall attack." Three at once said, "We attack soon." Four arrows at once said "We attack now." An arrow shot off in a diagonal direction said as plainly as a pointing finger, "That way."

In the forests as well as upon the plains it was sometimes necessary for one man to communicate with another while the two were separated by days of time or miles of distance. What boy has not left a slanting stick to tell his companion which path he has taken in the woods? The boy does without instruction precisely what the savage does. When one party of Indians wishes to tell another party where it has gone the leader places a stick, stuck slantwise in the ground, pointing in the direction taken by the departing party.

Such were some of the long distance signals of the tribes, simple and easily understood by all. This is something interesting to study, but it has properly no connection with the sign language used as a common vehicle of communication in conversation. The sign language proper was executed by the movements, gestures and positions of the hands and arms, sometimes of other members of the body.

Some of the Indian signs are simple and readily understood. When the sign talker straddled his left hand with the two split fingers of the right you caught the idea of "horse" almost at once. When he held the hands thus and advanced them with a series of short, choppy, forward movements, you saw that the horse was going, that it was galloping. When the talker hooked his two forefingers and held his hands up at the sides of his head you saw the

him, whose name he does not know, about which he is in doubt, he points to it, then shakes his loosely extended fingers in front of him. "What is that?" I don't know what that is," he says, plainly, when you come to think of it.

Now, stop to think what you do with your hand when you say "No!" and say it emphatically. What does the heroine do on the stage when she spurns the villain's suit? Hand palm out, swept sharply down and to the right. It is "No" as plain as can be. Upon the other hand, we all know the implication of the extended hand when it is held in front of the body, as when one shakes hands or is pleased, or says "I am all right—the gesture of assent or of concurrence. When the Indian would say "Good; it is all right," he throws out his right hand in front of him, palm down, the edge of the hand away from him. When he says "Yes" he snaps his forefinger down upon the hand as he brings the hand quickly down in front of him. It is hard to explain, but when you see him do it you know he means "I've got you."

One will not see so much of the old sign talk among the tribes to-day if he travels among the reservations of the West, for the Indian is nothing if not practical, and he does anything in the easiest possible way. The changes in his life have rendered it unnecessary for him to rely much upon the sign language. There are halfbreeds and Carlisle graduates to interpret for him, and he likes to stand up before the Great Father and make a speech in that way, being always an orator, an actor, and an individual well aware of the full value of stage effect and dramatic action. He does not use the sign language because he does not have to use it. Hence it is now passing away. Scientists are beginning to study it, and are making minute records regarding the old speech of the plains. The United States government and the Smithsonian Institution are doing all they can to learn the old forms. The few trappers and hunters of the past who were once familiar with the sign talk, and who still live to tell us about it are sought out and interviewed carefully. Once a common fact, because it arose from a common necessity, it is now disappearing to join the ancient and soon to be forgotten story of one of the most interesting and most dramatic regions ever known in all the history of the world.

Some of the unhappiest people on earth have more money than they know what to do with.

WALES SETS A NEW STYLE.

Heir to England's Throne Rehears Creased Trousers.
This is the new photograph of the Prince of Wales, which has caused consternation among the chappies of New York. It is the proof indisputable of the fact that his royal highness is wearing his trousers without creases and has been wearing them so for some little time. The Prince's trousers are pressed "even all around" so as to give the leg a perfectly cylindrical "set." A Chicago exquisite was asked what effect this change of fashion on the part of the Prince would have on swelldom in America. He said: "There is no



WALES' NEW PICTURE.

doubt that the Prince of Wales sets the fashion for London and that we follow the London fashions in general. It is hard to say, however, whether the crease will go or not. We are largely elastic in our modes. The crease is without question desirable and pretty. I should say that if we wish to we can have creases in our trousers without the consent of any other nation. But if the business once gets a good start it is more than probable that the round leg will come into vogue again. Meanwhile I would advise my friends in the words of Pope: "Be not the first by whom the new are tried, Nor yet the last to lay the old aside."

An Army Guards the Sultan.
When the Sultan of Turkey attends the Friday midday prayer at the mosque in Constantinople the garrison of 30,000 men are stationed along the route in such a way that he shall be safely guarded from the moment he leaves his palace until he is on his carpet in the sacred edifice.

Beer Glasses Regulated by Law.
The ordinary beer glass is regulated by law in Bavaria and must hold exactly half a litre, or nearly nine-tenths of a pint.

Pleanty of Coal in India.
India is rich in coal, though little mining has as yet been done in that country.

The needle you hunt for in a haystack never pricks your finger.
The rich man travels when he will; the poor man when he can.