

GLIMPSES OF INDIAN LIFE

Striking Features of the Encampment on the Exposition Grounds.

STUDYING THE RED MAN AT SHORT RANGE

Stately Warriors, Sportive Young Bloods and Energetic Squaws Lend Animation and Color to the Picturesque Scene.

The exhibit of the Indian congress at the Trans-Mississippi Exposition, says a writer in the Nebraska City Conservator, is doubly interesting, in that on the one hand it is the first representative gathering ever attempted of our swiftly passing forefathers in our continental arena, and on the other it is something genuine in a wilderness—a howling wilderness—of Midway fairs. There is howling within that fence, but it is the utterance of savages man forgetting himself; there are to doubt points not altogether true to the red man's home customs, but imposture and exterior have no place there.

The grounds are opened to the public at 8 o'clock in the morning. One who enters the Indian enclosure for the first time at that hour is likely to feel some bashfulness. He is alone with the savages and their white custodians. He sees tents, fires, family groups, domestic business going on; here are three young squaws sitting on the grass, combing their hair, which hangs in a mop, glossy black, all around their heads; it is very thick and heavy and must be ample protection from cold; each one holds her comb in a full grip, like a chopping knife, and combts by main strength. The grass is wet with rain and the day is plainly not yet well under way, one feels that he is hardly welcome thus early among the red men.

Along the north side of the white quarters with the others, there is a gathering in front of one building and bright colors catch your eye. A glance shows that distribution of rations is the attraction. It is the women and old men with some of the children who are waiting there; each one, after some formality, departs soberly, with an armful of flat loaves most conspicuous in his burden. Nearly every woman has a child erect on her back held there in some way by her shawl; some of the youngsters tower above their mothers' heads. Three young men, early afoot, stand apart, tall and handsome in red and yellow, and look on for the most part in silence. Some workmen are at repairs up a ladder and one playfully menaces the other with a hatchet; a grant of appreciation runs through the group below.

INDIAN DIGNITY.

Two stately old men pass by wrapped in their blankets. Salute their evident dignity and they will bow gravely in return, and as often as they meet you thereafter. Their eyes are very alert and their faces, though grim, are by no means unfriendly.

Small banners before each group or tents make known what tribe inhabits them. To the east, and apparently detached from the main camp, lie Assinobines. One brave is about already, sitting in the wet grass, working at a slender stick, three lads stand watching him; for a guess, he is making a bow.

The air is filled with wood smoke, every camp has its fire and you are always getting to leeward of one or other of them. Another small camp everywhere, and soon trace it to the cooking. You can only see what ingredients go to the stove that are prepared. The fires are of basswood sticks, long and heavy, about three to each fire; they are so managed that only one end burns and that end is kept thrust up to the boiling pot. There is only a tiny blaze, but it is continuous and gives out little heat; this is not wasted, but goes together with the smoke, to cure certain strips of meat; that lie on a frame of withes some four feet from the ground.

Here is a sample installation: A pole is fixed at a proper distance above the fire and three or four of the white man's tin palms, with lids, are suspended from it, all steaming while in the middle hangs the main pot, easily capable of holding a small dog, full nearly to the brim of some liquor, with an intermediate mass of meat rising above it in the center. Near by the owners are at breakfast. A dozen bucks, squatting in a circle in the grass, are served by their obedient women, who go and come between them and the fire.

And what is this brought out from the adjacent lodge to be hung upon a conveniently projecting pole-end? A rounded board some 30x11 inches, covered and encased by closely wound strips of cloth, from which rises the brown face of a tiny Indian. Probably the baby that was born yesterday, whose mother thus puts him out of the way while she attends to breakfast. He cries, however, as a white child thus would do, and is taken down and handed about, board and all, among the young girls of the tribe.

A MYSTERY.

In this camp stands a tepee which is tightly closed and remains so through the day. From it issues a jingling, accompanied now and then by a thumping on some kind of a drum. You are left to your own agreeable surmises as to the nature of the ceremonial going on within, for this Midway resort yet innocent of guides and book boys.

Your attention is caught by an old woman keeping under a tree, rubbing and twisting a string under her hands. Is she cleaning fish with her thumbs? She pauses to put a big water pail to her mouth, but not for drink; the water is spouted out again in repeated jets over what she has in her hands, which you presently make out to be a small moccasin.

This may be the wearer sitting before the lodge door, with stolid, fat face uplifted to yours. As you smile at her confusion overcomes the small savage and the brown face disappears forward into the grass.

The day is advancing and little Indians are seen lingering, as it wishfully, about the pond that has been dug in the center of the village, but seems to be reserved for the washing of clothes. You will seldom find it without some of the women kneeling on the edge scrubbing and wringing up, the heat increases the skirts of the tepees are caught up and the breeze and the visitors' curious glances penetrate their privacy together. Here is a chattering group about a squaw, who has a youngster between her knees and is hunting through the jungle of his hair with destroying chum and brush. There are in the tents of the Omaha a noble warrior of large frame, leaning in the shade like a lion. You may, if you have time to view him, see his expressionless face and stretches his hand toward the puppy, very fat and woolly, that is scratching himself among the blankets. The little dog runs joyously to tumble over by the side of the chief, who feels his fat back and sides in a critical way, and there is room to doubt whether this puppie has so much ground as he may think for being content with himself. A schoolmaster-looking young man is authority for the statement that a dog was killed here yesterday.

TEPEE CHARACTERS.

Meantime the Assinobines have raised a new tepee, a fine one, covered with deerskin, tightly sewed and stretched tight as a drum. It has a red band around it near the top, from which creases with claws seem to wriggle down toward the ground. Every camp has one fine lodge painted with totem signs, but most of them are of mystic, whose blue Massachusetts imprint shows that Nebraska City starch has gone to its making up. There is another kind of but quite

mutter of consonants and swallows, with no vowel sounds apparent.

THE BATH ROOM.

This gentleman tells us that he is crazy anyway, but that he would have been plainer demented if he had tried to learn any more Indian languages. He is interrupted by a shame-faced warrior, who, it seems, wants to take a bath. Our friend conducts him to an apartment in the back house, with much frantic expectation, from the sound of it, and returns to us. It seems that the Indians are very cleanly and much devoted to the art of water but are unable to distinguish clearly at times between this different uses that the white man puts it to. Sons of his application fill them with curiosity, and even terror at first. "What is this?"—and his hands begin to grasp to illustrate the forthcoming interview with a punishment. "I had to get the plumber—see here a calling heard from the bath room, and he runs to learn the needs of the chief within, one eye of whom is burning brightly around the edge of the slightly opened door. It appears that he has forgotten the soap, and is thumbing about out after it, probably having orders on that head. Soap is supplied, and our Indian comes back to regale us with unhesitating reminiscences of life among the Indians.

Senor Venta, who is here as the interpreter of the Mexican band now playing at the exposition, says: "This is the band of the First artillery. It has been four times out of Mexico. This is its fifth trip. It has played at the Capitol building, Austin, Tex., the Atlanta exposition, the Dallas fair, New Laredo, Tex., at the electricians' convention and this exposition."

It will appear from this that the Mexican band now stationed here did not appear at Chicago nor at the Midway fair, as people generally think.

There are about thirty military bands in Mexico. In one occasion last year, the celebration of the 5th of May, the anniversary of the battle of Puebla in 1862, all these bands were heard playing under one conductor, 400 instrumentalists on one piece, entitled "The Battle of Puebla."

In answer to the question, "How do you account for the presence of so many bands in Mexico?" Captain Ricardo Pacheco,

through Senor Venta, stated that every barracks has its own instructor, who takes all enlisted men who show musical talent and trains them at the expense of the government. When they show proficiency in their different instruments they are then drafted into the regular bands.

There is one famous orchestra in Mexico, the Conservatory orchestra, which plays at the Grand Opera.

The conservatory is under government patronage and there people are

trained for the stage and concert work.

All persons showing talent are educated free of charge.

All the men in the band are, of course, under military discipline. They rehearse three hours every day in the year. When in Mexico they play on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays in the parks and boul-

evards.

As active Little squaw in blue blanket skirt and neat leggings is setting up the third teepee. She takes the three longest poles and ties them together near the small end. It is then easy for two people to set them up into a tripod in the scratches of which the tops of the other poles rest. The covering is then drawn around the whole, an opening being left low down on one side. The hole in the top around the poles seems not to be sufficient for ventilation, for a slit is left running down for several feet from it, with long flags standing up, which are carefully held open by poles coming up from the opposite side of the tent; the lower ends of these poles being set in the earth or holes in a heavy log of wood.

Our little squaw is working at it single-handed, and lets the whole thing tumble over two or three times, laughing like a passer. Then she comes up to where a party of bucks are sitting on a pile of poles and begins pulling one of them out without ceremony, the bucks jump up and alacrity and pay no attention.

It is most effective to have the band stand in horse-shoe shape, with the drums and traps in the center, immediately behind the conductor. No Mexican conductor ever turns his back upon the public, as it is considered a lack of courtesy.

Therefore Captain Director Ricardo Pacheco always faces the audience.

The band, as it is, has proved a strong attraction for the exposition.

The music is all of a high class order, but the captain, with conquisht grace, very frequently introduces some such popular selection as a hunting scene, bird vendor, etc., while the American war songs are well represented. The selection founded upon the themes of "Paxilouli" and the Massen suite, "Scenes Pittoresques," are played magnificently.

THOMAS J. KELLY.

A Sociable Time.

Meantime the terrible old judge is receiving visitors, no other than the three gorgeous chiefs in red and yellow from the Assinobine camp. They have come fast and in great state; after a "Howay" and a handshake they all gather together about the judge and sit upon the ground.

You wonder at not being impounded to buy anything at quadruple price. There appears to be no merchandise offered, but if this happens to be the one part of the fair of which you would like to have a role you may, after some inquiry, be directed to an inconspicuous tepee, where you are told you may find something, if you are lucky. Stooping at the entrance you find that four or five of the serious-looking Indians are introducing upon a silent concourse. Four or five of the serious-looking Indians are introducing upon a silent concourse.

They then sit, visiting in the politest and friendliest way, and all trying very hard to be good Indians for the time being; but something in the rigid set of their features and the roll of their fierce eyes suggests irresistibly that those three young warriors would like very much to be at that old judge's throat.

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It would perhaps be curious to know how things look to a man who is an American of a hundred generations and sees the world behind copper-colored eyelids, but who has a father's love for his children and a statesman's concern for his people.

It is offered you, but if you signify a willingness to partake it will be gravely passed to you. You can proceed to business whenever you like. If it is moccasins you want you can easily signify that there is a grunt here and there, and presently there will appear from somewhere a pair that you will probably find, when you get home, fit you exactly. Payment is easy. You offer a suitable assortment of coins to the nearest warrior, and he picks out the right ones, which will come to about one-third of what you expected to pay, if you have ever bought such things of a dealer. Then, if you have behaved yourself well, he will shake hands with you into the bargain and you can withdraw; and you needn't expect him to wrap up your purchase.

New Arrivals.

By far the most curious feature of this day is the arrival of a band of newcomers.

Flatheads from Montana. They appear marching by twos from the gate in the southwest corner, two exposition officials in front, not looking very glad, and in the rear the wildest looking old savage on the grounds, having a long fringe of reddish hair, hanging down in front, from which it parts out some six inches. This is afterward appears it is not his own hair, but purely decorative, he is a very respectable chief, and a judge in his nation and has been to Washington. The line is halted by the wash houses on the south side and immediately there begins a running from all parts of the grounds, of braves hastening up to shake hands with the new arrivals. The orchestra was obliged to play largely for its own detection. The Apollo club, which appears here under Mr. Tompkins of Chicago, an organization of which this point sends a man with a badge on his hat, who has lived among them and knows their language, and he says that not only were they all strangers until they met here, but that many of them are of tribes who feel the same.

Then the wash houses begin to sing.

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