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OBSERVATIONS

"Totem Tales," with 174 illustrations, by W. S. Phillips, recently issued by the Star Publishing Co. of Chicago, is a collection of the folk-lore stories of the North Pacific coast Indians. Mr. Phillips tells the tales as he heard them from the lips of Indians squatted by the campfire in the great forests of the northwest, or from squaw men who got them from their "n-laws." Mr. Phillips says that the old Indian story teller is a fast vanishing type. He is disappearing with the elk and the buffalo before the engine of civilization. But Mr. Phillips was in time to feel his spell as he told the Indian legends of the origin of the sun, moon and stars, animals and men. "The story-teller's eyes shine with interest in his own story, and he acts as much of it as he can, posturing, gesticulating, talking with his hands as much as with his mouth, and the musical gutturals of the Indian tongue adding greatly to the story value of the tale. The giant pines rise up and up from the circle of the light until they are lost in the blackness that is only intensified by the blaze. The shadows flit about as the fire flickers, and it is not long until every Indian in the circle of listeners imagines he can see demons and fairies in the nooks of every bush and peeping from behind the giant trees, and they are in precisely the same state of mind that children are who listen to, and believe, the frightful ghost stories told them by some old woman."

The legends account for the presence of mountains and other natural objects, the beginning, of creation, of animals and birds. "In dem days," as Uncle Remus says, the beasts talked together and various accidents decided the form their descendants should bear. As, for

instance, in the story of Chee-Chee-Watah, the humming bird:

"While he stood there he saw a man who was standing still and throwing his hands about in the air over his head very fast, and trying to keep the rain from falling on him in this way.

"When Quaw-te-ah saw this he thought this man was very foolish, and he said to him, 'Why do you do this?'

"That is the way to keep the rain from falling upon you," said the man.

"You are foolish, and for your foolish ways, I will change your form," said Quaw-te-ah, the changer. "Go and be always in the form of Chee-chee-watah, the Humming Bird, and throw your arms fast for the rest of your life."

"And so by the magic of Quaw-te-ah the man was changed into the form of the little bird that makes a noise with his wings, Chee-chee-watah, and now you will always see him when the rain has just gone, or when the tears of Snow-qualm, the moon, fall at the coming of Polikely, the night, all because of his foolish ways when he was a man.

"Now, since this was done, no Indian is afraid of the rain, and does not care if it falls on him, because he remembers the Humming Bird, Chee-chee-watah."

The stories are all characterized by a childlike simplicity. The Greek mythology, which explained natural phenomena and the origin of man satisfactorily to the Greeks, has subtlety, and the lives of the gods unfold like a biography. The Indian tales, of the raven, the sun, the moon, the bear and the frog, relate their deeds of creation without idealizing the persons of the gods or totems from whom the Indians believe themselves descended. How beautiful the Sun God of the Greeks! And this is the description of the Indian Sun God:

"Now Speow was a very strange man to look at, because he was different from all other men. He was a short, fleshy man, with ears like a fox. His eyes were jet black, but were not like our eyes, for they were placed at the end of horny knobs that stuck out from Speow's brow. A lobster has eyes like the eyes of Speow. In his mouth were two great tusks like the fangs of a cougar. His nose was sharp and pointed, and he wore a long white beard that reached below his waist. Speow could change himself into any shape he liked and could change the shape of other things as well. He could cut himself to pieces and put himself together again. His body could be killed and skinned, but that would not kill Speow because of his magic."

The story shows, perhaps better than any other, the simplicity and the limited imagination of a people without arts and without literature.

The author has not transfused his material, but has put it into English, using the simplest words in the language for his purpose. The tales have the flavor of a soil covered by drying and rotten

pine needles stirred by the salt sea air of the ocean. Every one is disappointed who has gone into a forest and laid his head down on the earth, expecting to be intoxicated by the odor of violets and all sweet scents. The soil, and especially forest soil, has a peculiar flavor, not sweet and not at all seductive. There is a hint of violets and the May, but to the luxurious nostril, enervated by sachet powder and by great lunches of Parma violets, it is a very common smell, to be avoided thereafter if possible. But the more you breathe that ancient odor the more you like it. The same may be said of these Indian legends. The bold narrative without ingenuity of plot or suggestion of beauty, is flat to a palate accustomed to Zola, Balzac and Du Maurier. Even Howells and James are highly seasoned compared to these. But as I read the antiquarian spirit was developed. The witchery of the winds, the whispering and the waving, the constant presence of the sky, the absence of drapes, pianos, chairs, carpets and everything that denotes the distance the race has travelled since it lived outdoors, tuned my spirit into harmony with the Indian tales.

Quite aside from the literary interest, Totem Tales has an ethnological value. Where the red men are not degenerating they are becoming civilized and the accomplishment of the task Mr. Phillips has begun will soon be impossible.

The letter press and the illustrations are by the same hand. The latter are faithful copies of the northwest Indian, his costumes, carvings and lodge as well as the coast animals and plants of the North Pacific slope.

Mr. W. S. Phillips is a nephew of our own Captain R. O. Phillips and he resides in Beatrice. His book has received very favorable notices in the magazines and bids fair to be one of the successful books of the year so far as the sale is concerned as well as in other respects.

It is Miss Flora, instead of Miss Edna Bullock, who is awarded the first prize in The Courier prize contest. Mr. A. C. Ziemer is the author of "The Story of the Deacon and the Four Advertising Solicitors," which takes the second prize. If the chuckles which issued from the composing room while the story was being set up, and the laughter which nearly overcame the proofreader while revising Mr. Ziemer's story, are indications of humor, then the Deacon's ruse will amuse all who read it.

The judges who decided upon the stories submitted for competition were ignorant of the names of the authors, so that local pride had nothing to do with it. The Courier received stories from all over the state, and several from the east. Most of them are very good, and some will be published in subsequent issues of this paper.

The Woman's club of Denver has a membership of over five hundred. It is divided into departments just like the Lincoln Woman's club, and is doing conscientious work. The art department is working to provide the public schools of the city with good pictures, of which it has already secured a number by donations and purchase. They consist of reprints, fotografas and fotogravures of some of the best paintings.

The directors of the city library have cut off "The Damnation of Theron Ware" from the list of new books to be ordered. The committee said it was not a proper book for a public library. Yet Ian McClaren, Dr. John Watson, the author of "The Bonnie Briar Bush," recommended by ministers and the good of all nations, says that he considers Harold Frederic among the first of American novelists. He said also that the English considered "The Damnation of Theron Ware" the best book of the year, and that Frederic is more discussed and read at the present time in England than any other author, either English or American. But the book committee of the public library will see to it that Lincoln does not read Frederic. And no book could have a better advertisement in the way of a send off than that.

The first edition of "The Damnation of Theron Ware" was published last June. The first edition was published by Stone and Kimball in March, 1896. In June, in September and on the last of September another edition was published. Four editions in as many months is excuse enough, if excuse be needed for its review here.

Theron Ware is a young, talented Methodist preacher—not a minister—for that comes by grace and character. He preached because he took oratorical prizes at college and passed through some sort of an experience which felt like what he supposed to be conversion, something that did not affect his conscience or the place in him in which principle starts from and develops. He is a farm lad. He took after his parents in religion as unconsciously as he copied the twang of their speech. He became a preacher and thought very well of himself, considering his talents, for accepting so humble a profession. He greets every new experience with outstretched hands and is easily conquered by the world, the flesh, the devil, or the love o' woman, call it what you like.

He is settled in a small parish, who dole out his salary to him grudgingly—and their treatment has begun to make a cynic out of him—when he meets and follows a little procession of labouring men, carrying one of their number on a litter wounded to death. At the dying man's door they set down their burden and although the man is a Catholic,