

NOTES  
OF A  
TWENTY-FIVE YEARS' SERVICE  
IN THE  
HUDSON'S BAY TERRITORY.

BY JOHN M'LEAN.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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service in years of scarcity. Thus the labour of the women contributes as much to the support of the community as that of the men.

The men are passionately addicted to gambling, staking everything they possess, and continuing at it night and day, until compelled to desist by sheer hunger, or by the loss of all. I could not understand their game; we, in fact, used our best endeavours to abolish the pernicious custom, and, to avoid countenancing it, were as seldom present as possible. It is played with a few small sticks, neatly carved, with a certain number of marks upon them, tied up in a small bundle of hay, which the player draws out successively, throws up and catches between his hands; and when all are drawn, they are taken up one by one, and dashed against a piece of parchment, and rolled up again in the hay.

The whole party appear merry enough at the commencement of the game, all joining chorus in a song, and straining their lungs to such a degree, that hoarseness soon ensues, when they continue their amusement in silence. When the

game is ended, some of them present a sad spectacle; coming forth, their hair dishevelled, their eyes bloodshot, and faces ghastly pale, with probably nothing to cover their nakedness, save perhaps an old siffleux robe, which the winner may be generous enough to bestow. They never shoot or hang themselves, let their luck be ever so bad, but sometimes shoot the winning party.

Dogs, if not held sacred, are at least as much esteemed by them as their own kindred. I have known an instance of a quadruped of the cynic sect being appointed successor to a biped chief, and discharging the duties of his office with the utmost gravity and decorum; appearing at the feast given in honour of his deceased predecessor, and furnishing his quota—(this of course by proxy)—of the provisions. This dog-chief was treated by his owner with as much regard as if he had been his child! All, indeed, treat their dogs with the greatest respect, calling them by the most endearing epithets:—"Embark, my

son;" "Be quiet, my child;" "Don't bark at the white men, they will not harm you."

The lewdness of the Carrier women cannot possibly be carried to a greater excess. They are addicted to the most abominable practices; abandoning themselves in early youth to the free indulgence of their passions, they soon become debilitated and infirm; and there can be no doubt that to this monstrous depravity the depopulation of the country may, in part, be ascribed.

They never marry until satiated with indulgence; and if the woman then should be dissatisfied with the restraint of the conjugal yoke, the union, by mutual consent, is dissolved for a time; both then betake themselves to their former courses. The woman, nevertheless, dare not, according to law, take another husband during this temporary separation. Whoever infringes this law, forfeits his life to the aggrieved party, if he choose, or dare to take it.

Polygamy is allowed; but only one of the women is considered as the wife. The most

perfect harmony seems to subsist among them. When the favourite happens to be supplanted by a rival, she resigns her place without a murmur, well pleased if she can only enjoy the countenance of her lord in a subordinate situation. Yet a rupture does sometimes occur, when the repudiated party not unfrequently destroys herself. Suicides were frequent among the females in the neighbourhood of Fort Alexandria.

The Takellies are a sedentary people, remaining shut up in their huts during the severer part of the winter. You may then approach a camp without perceiving any sign of its vicinity, until you come upon their well, or one of their salmon *caches*. They are very social, congregating at each other's huts, and passing their time talking or sleeping. When awake, their tongues are ever in motion,—all bawling out at the same time; and it has often surprised me how they could possibly make themselves understood in the midst of such an uproar.

All Indians with whom I have come in contact, Christian as well as Pagan, are addicted to false-