

A CHIPPEWA TOMAHAWK.

AN INDIAN HEIRLOOM WITH A HISTORY.

BY W. THORNTON PARKER.

THE Indian who bestows a gift expects an equivalent of equal or greater value but nothing else. At the ceremony of the war-dance there is usually an opportunity to witness very clearly what is meant by the term "Indian Gift." Indian *exchange* would be a better term!

In the gift-dance one of the dancers leads off by placing at the feet of some warrior among those sitting on the ground in the oval of the great war-dance, a little stick, and informs him that this act represents the gift of a pony which he will receive on the morrow. Now the value of the pony may equal a large beaded tobacco-pouch, a handsomely beaded otter-skin or something else of value to the Indian. In a little while the man at whose feet the single stick has been laid begins his dance, and places at the feet of him who has been *his* donor two little sticks signifying that he will give for them an otter-skin, tobacco-pouch or something else.

An Indian gift is therefore one which can never be refused.

One day a visitor called at the Bishop Whipple Hospital to see the *Mus-Kee-Kee-Win-Ni-Nee* (Indian name for medicine man or doctor). He was a fine young sub-chief of the Chippewas, tall and straight as an arrow. He was indeed an interesting sight to behold. Above the deep vermilion-colored part of his raven-black hair the warrior's eagle-feather rose. He wore a pair of handsomely beaded deer-skin Chippewa moccasins, and deer-skin leggings, and about his body was wrapped a large snow-white blanket which he wore with chiefly pride. On his left arm rested a very handsome tomahawk with a heavy brass head and long wooden handle. For a short distance the handle was wound with otter-skin and was ornamented with many brass tacks. He walked like a man of powerful frame.

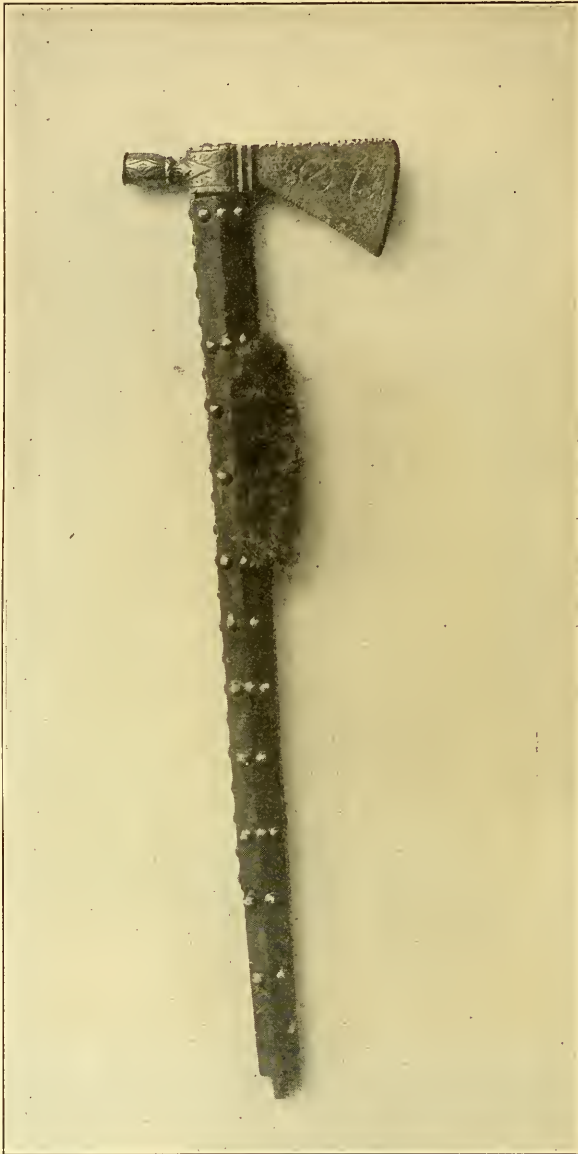
entered the hospital parlor where he waited standing for the surgeon whom he greeted with a hearty *bo-zho-nitchee* (Good-day, Friend). The interpreter stated that the young chief had called to pay his respects, and he made a very kindly and dignified speech to which the surgeon replied. Then when cigars were offered he accepted one, cut off the end, lighted it, placed it in the pipe end of his tomahawk and smoked it. At last the chieftain rose to deliver his parting words,



MEE-SHEE-KEE-GEE-SHIG
War Chief of the Chippewa Indians.

and spoke kindly of the coming of the pale-face doctor and of his good wife to whom the Indians had already given the name *Gee-Shay-Wah-Dec-Zid* (the Indian's true friend), and of their little son whom they had already loved to call *Mus-Kee-Kee-Win-Nin-Ninz* (the little medicine man). Then he stretched forth his tomahawk and offered it to the surgeon as a gift and token of friendship. The Indian related that the oldest Indians on the reservation had

always known of this tomahawk as an ancient tribal heirloom highly prized by all, and yet, treasure that is was, the chieftain said he



OJIBWAY TOMAHAWK
Ancient Tribal Heirloom Presented to Dr. Parker.

wished to present it to the doctor. The surgeon was surprised at the offer and immediately urged that such an heirloom should re-

main with the tribe if happily for many generations! Again the chief offered, the surgeon refused. "Does the medicine man refuse my gift?" asked the warrior. And the interpreter hesitatingly answered, "He does." With an angry look the Indian gathered his



DR. WILLIAM THORNTON PARKER.

white blanket around him and strode out of the hospital. Seeking the meanest Indian he could find on the reservation, he gave the splendid weapon to him as an insult to the surgeon.

In a short time this episode was related to Chief *Mee-Shee-Kee-*

Gee-Shig (Dark-lowering-clouds-touching-all-round). He was the war-chief of the Chippewas and an uncle of the young chieftain who had offered the tomahawk. He was also a friend of the surgeon. He knew at once the motives which actuated the surgeon for declining the gift, so he quickly hunted up the poor Indian to whom it had been given and gave him five dollars for the tomahawk. Hurrying with it to the hospital he explained to the surgeon the Indian custom concerning gifts. Then he said, "My good friend, please accept this from me," and so the incident was closed. The



DR. PARKER WITH CHIPPEWA INDIANS OF WHITE EARTH RESERVATION, MINNESOTA.

surgeon gave the war-chief a silver watch in exchange for the tomahawk.

For thirty-five years this tomahawk has been highly prized by the present owner, and it is still in perfect condition. The brass head is about eight inches high by three and a half inches at the widest portion of the blade. The handle is about two feet long. The heavy brass head of the tomahawk is for use in war, and for peaceful purposes to be used for a pipe. The handle has been bored for this purpose, and its extreme end has been fashioned as

a mouth-piece. Upon the brass blade an Indian shield, feather-decorated, and cross spears have been engraved, and below this an Indian beaver, and above all "P. E. B. Co.," some long since forgotten company of English fur traders who brought these brass tomahawks over the sea to trade with the Indians for their valuable furs. On the other side is an engraving of an Indian warrior. The pipe-bowl is also ornamented. The weapon was indeed worthy of



DR. PARKER IN BUCKSKIN HUNTING-SUIT MADE BY CHIPPEWA INDIANS.

an Indian chief of high degree. A glance would suggest a tomahawk and pipe; but the hatchet end, although deadly, could not inflict such a terrible wound as the pipe end which could smash a large round hole in the skull like a fifty-calibre bullet.

All this is but an item in the history of this remarkable weapon! What tales of bloody warfare it might relate if it could but speak!

What exciting battles it must have witnessed, and in its strange and fierce history how many owners must have enjoyed the proud honor of possessing it! At what famous war-dances and Indian ceremonies must it have held a conspicuous place! And now it occupies a little space in the library of an old Indian war veteran, and near by, to keep it company, hangs the owner's frontier sabre and "six-shooter," emblematic of the Pale-face victory over brave but conquered warriors.