

## A VISIT TO QUINAULT INDIAN GRAVES.

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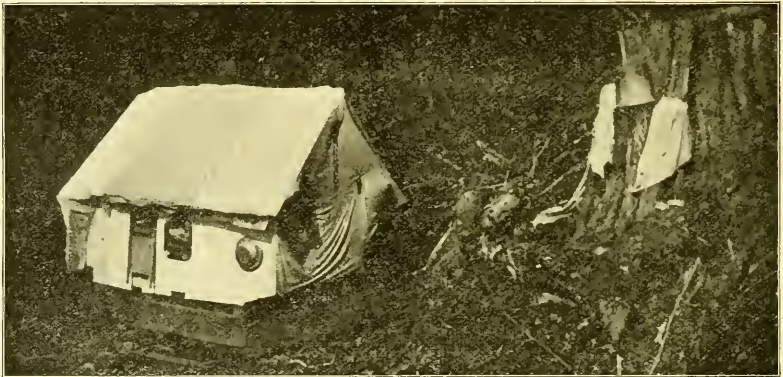
THE same ideas that led the Egyptians to build the massive pyramids, sepulchres for the dead, were present with the American Indian, inspiring him to provide comforts of life for his departed. The Indian of the past has few living representatives, but such beliefs as these of the things beyond human ken linger longest. Practices remain yet longer than the beliefs on which they were founded; survivals of the old customs may still be found in many a corner of our republic. Burial in canoes in some tribes, in trees, in others, are recently reported by travelers. There are doubtless in different parts of the United States and Canada many hundreds of Indian graves at which food and tools are still placed for the use of the departed. Not many years ago the Indian war chief had his horse, if he possessed one, buried with him. We hear no more of the custom practiced in some tribes of burial or burning of slave with master and wife with husband.

The writer visited in the summer of 1902 the Quinault (or Quinaielt or Queniult) and the Queets (or Quaitso) Indians in western Washington. There were scarcely two hundred of them on their triangular reservation extending about thirty miles along the Pacific coast and at its broadest part thirty miles up the Quinault river. The older people live in houses roughly built of hewn timber, consisting of a single room serving to smoke fish and shelter the family; but the more civilized have several rooms and separate smoke houses. In the olden time they wore skirts woven of cedar bark and shirts of cat tail. Now the men wear shirts and trousers, and the women crude waists and skirts of some sort of white man's goods.

These are by no means the least civilized Indians in the United States. If one asks adjoining settlers what peculiar native beliefs and customs they retain, she receives the answer, "O, they are just

like low down white folks; they live very dirty, that's the only difference." But a residence of only a few weeks reveals to the student interesting customs and arts, and many curious superstitions that introduce one to the wild Indian of other days.

The writer entered the reservation by way of an Indian canoe on the Queets river, along whose lower course are scattered houses of the Queets Indians, of the same language and customs as the Quinaults. Our Indian boatman took us skilfully through the rapids, between the rocks and on to the smooth water of the lower Queets, where we had leisure to enjoy the scenery of the banks,—the dense forest, the huge logs at the water's edge, here and there the abrupt cliff of rock or sand. About four miles from the mouth



CHICKAMIN'S GRAVE.

(Photograph by the author.)

we caught sight on our right of a small tent, as it seemed, with basin, mirror and wash-board hung on the wall outside. From previous experience the traveler recognized it as an Indian grave. To the question, "What is that?" the Indian boatman remained silent. After repeated questioning he answered, "Chickamin." Now Chickamin means money in the Chinook jargon, frequently used in this section. A white man told me later that the Indian, John Chickamin, was laid here.

I asked Dick to "stop there," pointing to the bank; he obeyed without protest, although he had previously refused all my entreaties to escort me to Indian graves. His good old squaw looked at him reprovingly as I stepped to the bank and climbed the bluff. Some of the underbrush and timber had been cleared away from the immediate vicinity of the grave, giving an opportunity to walk

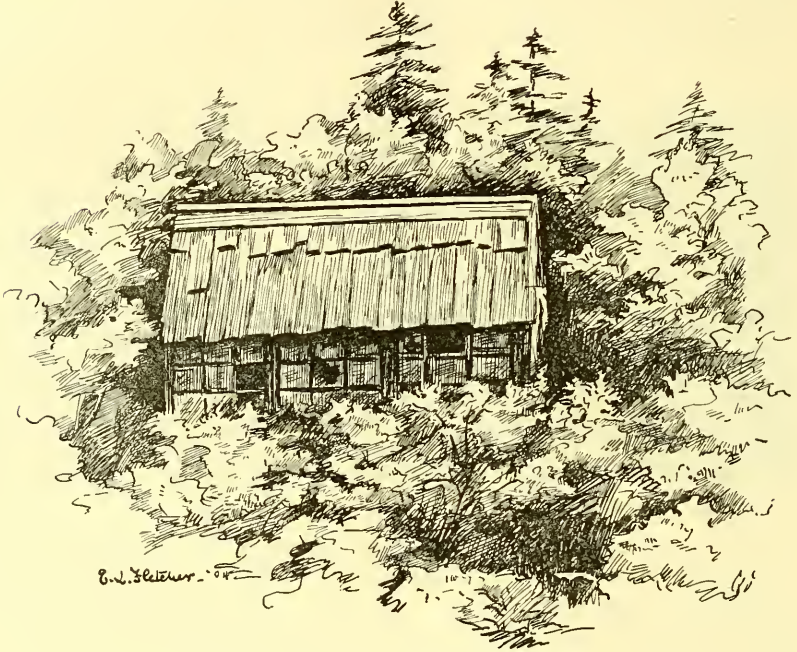
about and to take a snap shot. A bucket was turned upside down on a stump near by, some rags hanging by it; blankets were strewn on the ground near the grave; while the implements hung on the outside wall were yet more suggestive of the possessions of the dead. John Chickamin was an invalid and accustomed to use women's tools instead of the canoe and fishing net. What was inside the grave, I could not tell. The white muslin, which had suggested a tent as we saw it from our canoe, was the covering of a wooden shanty, to which it was tightly nailed. The wooden house itself was securely fastened, and without door or window. It was longer than a man and high enough for one to stand upright under its ridge pole, several times smaller than the smoky little houses of the living Indians, but built as securely as they.

During the several days that the writer spent with the Indian couple, Dick and Mary, she inquired in vain for information about graves,—where others were located, what were the ceremonies of burial, why the tools were placed at the graves. As well as Dick understood most questions he never could answer any of these things. Our motto "Speak no ill of the dead" adapted to Indian usage would be "Speak nothing of the dead."

A white man fortunately called one day at Dick's and located for me the Indian burying ground, by calling my attention to a roof visible through the dense forest of the opposite side of the river. After surveying the bank to choose a possible landing place near the spot, I agreed with Dick next morning to take me over and land me at the place indicated and call again near six in the evening. In this primeval forest of huge fallen trees and dense underbrush, even a good woodsman can go only about a mile in four hours. The feeble efforts of the writer brought her to the graves, a few hundred yards away, after a struggle of two hours over fallen trees ten feet in diameter and through underbrush between the hillocks of timber. One wonders how the friends of the departed ever escorted the dead men thither. During this scramble the graves were continually hidden from view by the debris. It is only when one is right upon them that they become visible.

The first grave that sprang up before me was the building whose roof I had already seen from the opposite bank. It was built on the hillside so that the eaves at the rear were not more than four feet from the ground. Mounting up on the roof from this side, one could scramble to the peak, and thence a glorious view spread out—the river below, a bit of timbered land, a sand bar, and beyond,—a half mile off,—the lovely blue Pacific. The trees

had been cut away just about the grave; moreover a place had been chosen where there was a natural break in the forest; and to make the outlook complete, the whole front of the grave was a window made of several sash pieced together. The survivors had not, I imagine, sought a beautiful view for its own sake, but they wanted the dead to have a good survey of river and sea and be able to launch his spirit canoe and sail away as of old. Within, two small drums lay untouched awaiting decay; the trunk and the dishes were growing old and dingy; the woven cat tail matting



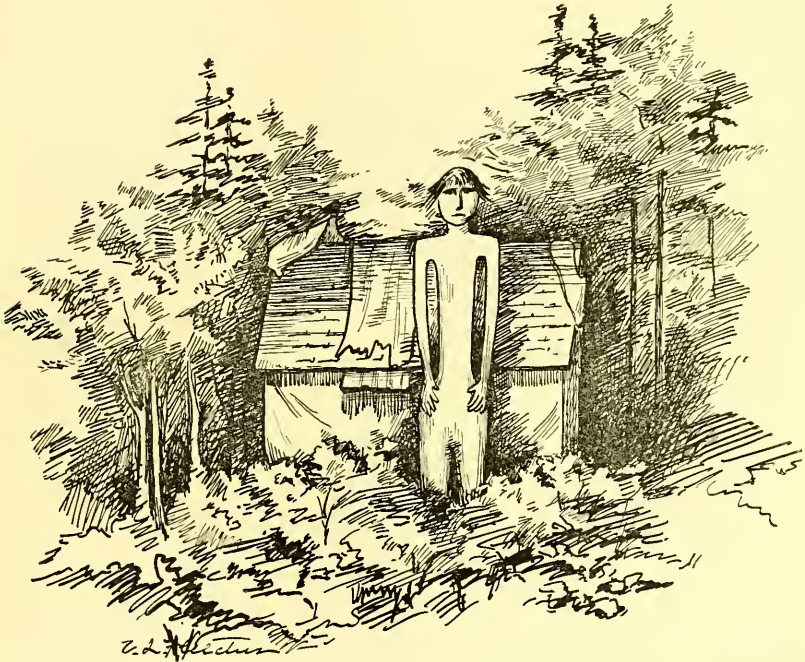
A GRAVE ON THE QUEETS RIVER.

From a sketch by Miss E. L. Fletcher.

that covered the body was rotting; and the corpse, what power could it have to go out to sea? And yet the faith remains that provides all these things for the dead. But along with this faith is the haunting fear which leads the survivors to put the graves on the other side of the river and to stay away from the dead after he is placed in his house. Near this grave was an old broken trunk, a rusty tin pan and a wooden box with a lid covered with mouldy leaves. They were probably further possessions of the dead that had been originally placed carefully in front of the grave.

Some animal strolling by, or the wind and rain in their usual activity had swept these out of position and left them to rot the more quickly.

But there were other graves to be found in this impassable wilderness. Somewhere near here was a grave with images. Dick and the other Indians of course professed to know nothing of it or of any other grave; but the testimony of a white boy was my firm reliance, and he was right. Only a few hundred feet further up the river and easily accessible (as these woods are) from the



GRAVE AND IMAGE ON THE QUEETS RIVER.

Sketch by Miss Fletcher from a photograph.

first grave, I came upon the second building. And there in front of it stood a rudely carved wooden image six feet and a half high, judging by comparison with my own height, reaching above the roof, with stiff, black hair hanging from the top of its head and bits of iridescent blue shell serving for eyes. The dark red color of the whole figure was varied here and there with shadings of black and with bands of white and light blue in the upper parts. A similar image, but without hair or eyes of shell, stood in front of a tree at the rear. These were powerful helpers undoubtedly to dead

as well as living. I was unable to learn the special offices of these images other than that they were of value in curing disease and had formerly stood in the house of the Indian doctor who had made and used them. This I heard from a reliable old white settler who knew the Indians well and had formerly seen the images and learned of their use.

Aside from the images, the grave was an interesting one. Some two dozen or more dishes—bowls, plates, cups and saucers—some of them broken, lay scattered down the bank in front. Most



GROUP OF DISHES FROM A QUEETS GRAVE.

of them were pierced by a hole in the center, which had served probably to nail them to the side of the grave; according to another interpretation of the white neighbors, these holes are shot through the dishes to render them unattractive to grave robbers. A part of a roof lay down the bank; formerly, I suppose, the dishes were carefully placed in front of the grave and covered by this roof. Curiosity had to stop with the outside of the house, no glass front revealed the inside. The building occupied a space of about five by eight feet, with a height of five and a half feet. It was covered

with calico, now torn into rags. Pushing aside the curtain on the front wall, two framed pictures were revealed, one a photograph of Rosa Lee, and the other, a well-known chromo of a lady with a red cloak knocking at the door.

The profuseness with which the graves are furnished with articles of luxury and use is quite in contrast with the meagre furnishings of the houses of these Indians, which must be seriously diminished when a member of a household dies. Let us remember that in many tribes before the coming of the whites, even a rich family was reduced to absolute want by gifts to the dead and to those who came to his funeral. Two of the ideas that lay at the root of the custom were the desire to provide generously for the dead, and dislike or fear of using things that he had used.

Willoughby in 1886 writes:\* "The house in which an Indian dies is sometimes torn down; recent orders forbid this practice now. Instead a tamanawas is often kept up in the house for three days after death to drive away the spirit supposed to be still haunting the place."

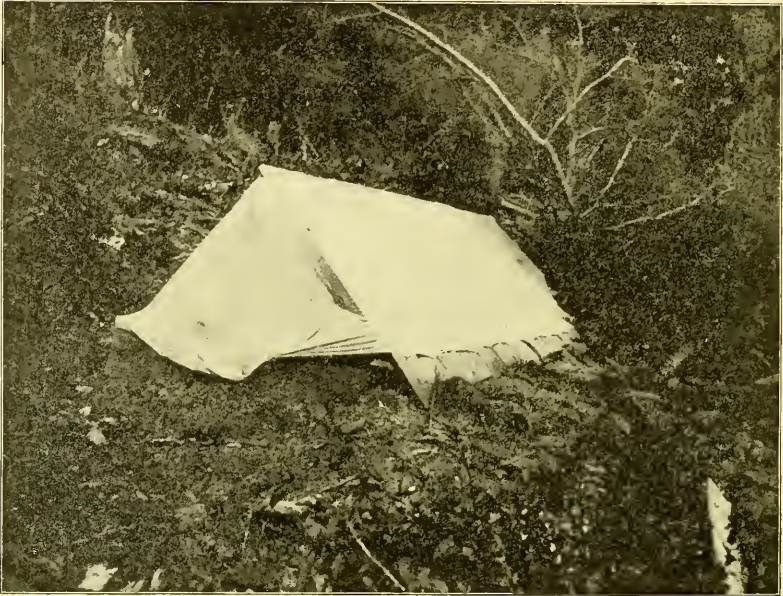
I have called these houses of the dead graves; but the word grave properly applies only to a place where one is buried. These corpses were placed above ground. In the Indian village, Granville, six miles further south, the seat of the government agency, corpses are buried. The United States government has compelled it for hygienic reasons. The suggestion of the former house remained in a roof over the grave and the usual sheeting of calico stretched over this. The debris rotting amid the underbrush indicates the former more elaborate methods of disposing of the dead. An old canoe lay wrong side up under the bushes. It was the coffin of an Indian, fallen from its supports. The settlers had told us of the canoe coffins that were used in former time. Willoughby mentions the canoe burial of a certain Quinault girl as representing an occasional practice only. Here there were few goods left at the burying place. A little fence built about one grave and other touches of civilized life, showed that the old customs were fast passing away.

But one mistakes if he depends on general appearances. Even with coffin and grave like a white man's there are many traces of the old Indian custom. A white settler told us of the burial of an Indian woman who had lived with her husband in the flourishing town of Hoquiam. He was a thrifty Indian and spent freely at his wife's funeral, for coffin and shroud such as his white neighbors would get. In addition he gave the corpse a hundred dollars in

\* *Annual Report, Smithsonian Inst.*, pt. 1, p. 277.

bills, tearing them in shreds to prevent theft, and putting them in her mouth.

Let no one imagine that the day has quite passed in which one may see real Indian customs in our country. But if he hopes to see them, he must be prepared to bunk in a tent or stage or Indian house en route, and once arrived, to settle down expecting to see



A GRAVE AT GRANVILLE, WASHINGTON.

Photograph by the author.

and learn nothing until he has gradually become acquainted. His Indian neighbors will become social in time. The white men he encounters will show and tell him much without knowing it, and after the pieces are patched together, there appears to his delight a really suggestive picture of Indian life as it used to be.