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OF

# NATURAL HISTORY

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These had probably been prepared to fill up chinks in the walls of the dam. The trees had been, for the most part, cut into sections averaging ten feet in length, and the branches and twigs had been trimmed off as cleanly as a wood-chopper could have cut them. Along the banks of the White River, some weeks before, I noticed several artificial canals which had been dug out in the absence of natural side-channels in the river. These were designed for floating down logs. One canal was four feet in width, seven in length, and several feet deep. — E. A. BARBER.

#### ANTHROPOLOGY.

CREMATION AMONG THE SITKA INDIANS. — During the writer's residence at Sitka, the capital of Alaska Territory, he had the opportunity of witnessing the interesting ceremony of cremation as performed by the Sitka Indians.

The subject of this solemn rite was the dead body of an old squaw, who was the mother of a numerous progeny. The day fixed for its consummation was the one immediately succeeding her death. About nine o'clock on the morning in question, four of us filed through the wooden stockade that separates the town of Sitka from the Indian village. After threading our way for some distance among the rocks along the beach, and through the filth which invariably surrounds an Indian habitation, we at length reached the dwelling-place of the deceased. As we approached we were greeted by the barking of a dozen or more wolfish-looking dogs. The hut was a substantial one, built of logs so carefully hewn that one could scarcely believe that their smooth surface was not due to the plane of a carpenter. The roof was formed of long, thin slabs, split from spruce or cedar trees, and had but a slight pitch. Immediately over the centre of the house a large rectangular hole was cut in the roof to give egress to the smoke arising from the fire within. To prevent the snow and rain from descending through this opening, a short ridge-pole, held up by two small forks which were fastened, one at each end of the hole, to the main ridge-pole, supported a covering of long slabs whose lower ends rested upon the main roof, while the upper ones projected far enough to screen the interior in a great measure from the uncomfortable effects of the driving storms.

The only entrance was through a circular hole about two feet in diameter, placed about six feet above the ground, and reached by half a dozen steps. Through this hole we had to crawl on our hands and knees, and by a corresponding descent on the inside we reached the floor, which was also made of slabs laid upon the ground, except a place about eight feet cut in the middle where the fire is built.

At the end opposite the door was erected a kind of closet, arranged with shelves, upon which were stored the winter supplies of smoked salmon, seal oil, and dried berries, together with the usual stock of blankets and peltries.

In one corner of the room were blankets, which in turn were tied up in such a manner and thus enshrouded it was about half-filled with Indian

On one side of the room a pair of scissors in cutting of both male and female. The customs among these Indians, during which he had outbursts of grief, a process by old An-a-hoots, the war small portal. Each carried hard wood and carved all colored Hudson Bay blankets broad, square shoulders. The by the high polish they possessed pungent odor. The warriors of the house, facing the death chant, keeping time by the floor, and letting them fall monotonous than musical.

All this time the relatives their lamentations. Every with a fresh coat of seal almost inconceivably hideous.

At the close of the death the roof and lowered bark fast to the matting that sign to the young men, an opening in the roof. They in this manner instead of they have that the spirit of just as it arrived at the roof lifeless bundle upon the fire direction. For a moment shrieks and yells of superstition and children baffle description fire and hurriedly carried out was about forty yards in the made to take it through the woman's spirit was angry and upon which the body had fallen of bark by the young squaw fear they might bring down the inmates of the house.

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In one corner of the room we found the corpse, completely incased in blankets, which in turn were enveloped by a large, woven sea-grass mat, and tied up in such a manner as to bring the knees nearly to the chin, and thus enshrouded it was placed in a sitting posture. The house was about half-filled with Indians, — men, women, and children.

On one side of the room a young brave was busily engaged with a pair of scissors in cutting off the long black hair of all the near relatives, both male and female. This seems to be one of the usual mourning customs among these Indians. After he had completed this tonsorial duty, during which he had been frequently interrupted by their sudden outbursts of grief, a procession of about twenty Indian warriors, headed by old An-a-hoots, the war chief of the tribe, filed slowly through the small portal. Each carried in his hand a long slender staff made of hard wood and carved all over with fantastic figures, while bright-colored Hudson Bay blankets fell in not ungraceful folds from their broad, square shoulders. These staves bore evidence of their great age by the high polish they possessed, as well as by their smoky color and pungent odor. The warriors ranged themselves in line along one side of the house, facing the centre, and immediately began a lugubrious death chant, keeping time by raising their staves about three inches from the floor, and letting them fall together. This doleful air was much more monotonous than musical.

All this time the relatives of the deceased were rending the air with their lamentations. Every Indian present had his face thickly smeared with a fresh coat of seal oil and black paint, thus rendering himself almost inconceivably hideous.

At the close of the death song two stalwart young braves mounted to the roof and lowered bark ropes through the aperture, which were made fast to the matting that enveloped the corpse. An-a-hoots made a sign to the young men, and they began raising the body toward the opening in the roof. They always remove their dead from their houses in this manner instead of through the door, on account of a superstition they have that the spirit of the defunct made its exit in this way. But just as it arrived at the roof one of the ropes broke, precipitating the lifeless bundle upon the fire below, scattering the burning coals in every direction. For a moment all was terror, confusion, and dismay. The shrieks and yells of superstitious horror that went up from the women and children baffle description. The body was hastily snatched from the fire and hurriedly carried out through the door to the funeral pile, which was about forty yards in the rear of the house. No second attempt was made to take it through the hole in the roof, as they thought the old woman's spirit was angry and did not desire it. All the coals and ashes upon which the body had fallen were then hastily scraped up with pieces of bark by the young squaws, carried out and thrown into the sea, for fear they might bring down unheard-of evils upon the heads of the living inmates of the house.

The pyre was built of cedar logs. The foundation consisted of two logs about five feet long and ten inches in diameter, laid parallel to each other, and about two feet apart. Upon these was placed transversely a layer of shorter logs of a less diameter, with interstices between them through which the flames could penetrate from below. This base was surmounted by a small superstructure of cedar crib-work, large enough to contain the corpse and its mortuary habiliments. Into this the remains were placed and covered with small sticks of wood. Near the windward side of this pile were laid two boards, along which were ranged the singing warriors; the only office of these boards appeared to be that of furnishing a hard, resonant surface upon which the staves they used to indicate the measure of their chant could fall. Close by the crib was a pile of spruce and cedar, finely split, in order that it might burn more rapidly. The mourning relatives were seated on the ground with their backs turned toward the pyre, and about thirty feet distant. At last the torch was applied to the resinous tinder, the warriors began anew their melancholy dirge, the mourners, whose loud lamentations had before sunk to a low sobbing, now broke forth afresh into heart-rending wails. Several hours were occupied in the entire consumption of the pile, during which the chanting never ceased, but after a time the outward grief of the bereaved was confined to weeping and subdued sobs. When the fire had died out the remaining ashes and cinders were carefully collected and laid in their final resting-place.

The cinerary urn consisted of a small house built after the model of their huts, being about three feet long by two feet wide, and two high, and placed about ten or twelve feet above the ground on four posts. These dead houses are often carved and painted on the exterior in the most cabalistic manner. It was formerly the custom among these Indians to kill a number of slaves upon the occasion of the death of one of their tribe, but the military authorities of the United States have suppressed the barbarous practice since their occupation of the territory. These slaves are prisoners of war, taken from other tribes, and their bondage is hereditary. The number of slaves sacrificed depended upon the rank of the deceased.

#### GEOLOGY AND PALÆONTOLOGY.

SCUDDER ON FOSSIL INSECTS FROM BRITISH COLUMBIA. — A small number of fossil insects obtained by Prof. G. M. Dawson in British Columbia, from tertiary beds, have been described by Mr. Scudder in the Report of Progress for 1875-76 of the Geological Survey of Canada. The specimens are better preserved, as a general rule, than any that have been obtained from other American localities. Besides fragmentary indeterminate remains not mentioned, there are twenty-four species or more which can at least be referred to families. Beetles were, with but one exception, absent from the collection, which consisted of Hymenop-

tera (ants and ichneumonid plant-louse, and a dragon

BRAIN OF CORYPHODON. — An abstract sent by Professor Scudder contains several discoveries recently made by him in the brain of *Coryphodon*. Reference is made to a new classification of insects, and interest the readers of the *Journal*. The case of *Coryphodon* was discussed in the *American Journal of Science* (1876), and this fact was well known to the public. First, the accuracy of the statement to it. Second, the accuracy of the statement of Professor Cope, so far as it concerns the brain of *Coryphodon*. Third, his statements in regard to the brain of *Coryphodon* refuted by a series of well-considered objections based on these allegations, and which are against it.

I deem it especially necessary to state that Professor Cope has recently published communications quite as incorrect as those mentioned above.

#### GEOGRAPHICAL NEWS.

GEOGRAPHICAL NEWS. — The German explorer of the Congo River, is dead. The German explorer of the Congo River, is dead.

After an absence of several months, Gordon reached Cairo on the 1st of December. The task assigned to him of opening a commercial highway from the Nile to the Red Sea, Sir Samuel Baker, who had left the newly explored territory, and had left the newly explored territory, Gordon has succeeded in opening a line of posts, fifty to sixty miles long, from Gondokoro, and thence to the Red Sea, far perfected that English expedition in seven weeks from their departure.

Four maps of the Nile basin, published in the *Transactions of the Geographical Society*, and a single sheet in Markham's *Journal*. E. G. Ravenstein announces