

The INDIAN LEADER

CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS AS TOLD BY HASKELL PUPILS.

OTOE.

The Indians at my home celebrate Christmas Day just like white people do, only they do not have programs, but a big dance. Our Indians think Christmas is about the happiest day of the year, because on Christmas morn you can see little children, glad and happy, going from tepee to tepee saying "Christmas gift." The children are not the only ones; even the old folks are glad and happy, too.

On Christmas afternoon they have a big feast. They have all kinds of things to eat—apples, oranges, bananas, candies, and all kinds of fruit for the children. After the feast they have speeches from some of the men, who talk about Christ, our Saviour. They remember it is His birthday and they believe in giving presents away just as they gave presents to Wa-kon-da, which means Christ. They gave presents to Christ in Bethlehem when He was born and the Indians think they should give just as the people did in those days.

On Christmas Eve about 8 o'clock you can hear a drum and men singing songs of joy and gladness to the tribe. Then they sing a warning song for a big dance. The children, women, and men gather in the dancing hall. In this dance they have about 8 men to sing and about 14 more men can dance if they wish. The dancers dress up in real Indian clothes. They sing one song and repeat the chorus. If you want to give anything to anyone who has said "Christmas gift" to you, you should dance at the repeat. The Indians all have a chance to give presents away. They

get all mixed up giving presents of all kinds. They get horses, beef, hogs, turkeys, chickens, wagons, buggies, and sometimes a good buggy team. Sometimes the horses are decorated with calico, beadwork, and blankets. They also give away lots of money. When anyone has given you a horse or a team you should be his friend; that's the custom. Next Christmas you should do the same to him. The children get their toys at the dance, which is kept up till about 11 o'clock. Other tribes come to visit on Christmas—the Omaha, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kaws, Iowa, Winnebago, and Ponca. They sure have some good times. From Christmas to New Years they have something doing. They have another big dance on New Year's night, and then comes the New Year's giving, just as on Christmas. At the New Year dance they make up some new songs.

MENOMINEE.

Years ago the Menominee Indians celebrated their Christmas after their own fashion. They feasted and danced their Indian dances. This was their way of worship. About two or three weeks before the holiday the chief of the tribe and his helpers met at a certain place usually at the home of the chief, and talked and planned for the coming celebration. The place was selected where the people should gather and all such arrangements as that made. This was then made known to the rest of the Indians. Long before this the Indians began their preparations for the coming feast. The men and boys hunted and got the meat for the feast in that way. The women dried the fruit

and meat and did other things toward getting ready. A day or two before the feast they start to move their belongings to the place selected. Everyone was there when the day came. They had some kind of shelter under which they ate and danced; at other times they stayed in their own wigwams. Only the men danced in most of the dances. They dressed in their brightest colors and painted their faces, to make themselves better looking, as they thought. There were certain dances that the women took part in. They usually spent a week or so in this way.

CHEROKEE.

Many people of my tribe celebrate Christmas by giving a Christmas dinner. On Christmas morning the invited guests arrive and the men and boys spend the forenoon playing games of different kinds. They also have target practice which is very interesting to watch. As a usual thing the young boys are as accurate in shooting the rifle as the older men. They generally have dinner at 12 o'clock and the women and girls are invited to dinner before the men and the boys. They generally have for dinner many kinds of fruits, cakes, pies, chicken, turkey, pork, and meats of many

wild animals. In the afternoon the men and boys tell stories of their experiences and journeys and some of the boys go skating or rabbit hunting.

CHIPPEWA.

The Chippewa Indians where I came from hardly celebrate Christmas for the reason that many do not know what Christmas is for. The old Indians used to tell their children to be good if they wanted anything from the Santa Claus. One Christmas Eve my mother told us children that Santa Claus was going to come about midnight and that we should all be sleeping at that time. If we uncovered our heads while he was in the house he would not give us anything, besides he would scratch our eyes out. When we were all ready to go to bed each of us hung up our stockings; some hung their shoes. My mother used a dish pan and my father hung his mackinaw at the foot of the bed and threw his hat under the bed. The next morning all of us woke up and found everything filled with good things to eat. In my mother's pan were some apples, etc. In my father's mackinaw every pocket was filled with sweet things to eat and we ate all we wanted that day.

