

## THE LUMMI INDIANS.

---

ALBERT B. REAGAN.

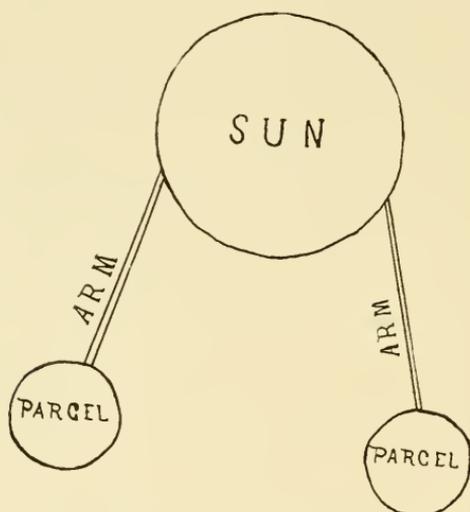
---

The Lummi Indians occupy the Lummi Peninsula just across Bellingham Bay west from the City of Bellingham, Washington. The peninsula, containing about two townships, is their reservation. They number in all about three hundred and seventy-five, most of whom are half-breeds. These resemble the mulattoes of the south very much as to physical appearance and color; their hair, of course, is black and straight. The full-breeds are nearly all old Indians, most of whom are blind. They are all fishing Indians by nature. Formerly they lived almost wholly by fishing for salmon and trout; but since they took their allotments some years ago they live on their farms and till the ground most of the year, fishing only in August and September. At this time they sell fish to the canneries and also dry it for their own use. In old times they made flour from the fern root, but now the white-man's flour has taken its place. Their farming is very well done and their houses are often better than those of their white neighbors, though usually not kept so neat inside. The tribe as known today is made up of Nooksack, Lummi, Snowhommish and British Columbia Indians. They belong to the Salish linguistic stock, and now all talk the Lummi branch of that language. When that fails they use the Chenook jargon as a means of communication. The young people all speak English. They are advanced in civilization almost to our standard; many of them even take daily newspapers.

In old times these Indians practiced all the ceremonies known to their linguistic group. They waged war for the sole purpose of capturing slaves. They flattened their babies' foreheads so that a modern hat fits them better cross-wise than the way we wear it. They had mortuary dance ceremonies. They believed in the superhuman power of medicine men. They slashed themselves with knives and thrust their arms through with arrows and elk bones in the medicine ceremonies. They had give-away dance feasts at which the man who gave away most was made chief. And they carved or painted their special dreams or visions (called in Chenook "tomanawis") in conspicuous places in their "plank" houses, usually on totem poles, as a

mark of good luck or a guide to their lives. A carving of this sort is now to be found on each of the totem-posts of an old give-away, feast dance hall ("potlatch" house), now in ruins at the Portage on the reservation. An interpretation of this totem-tomanawis was given me as follows by Mr. McClusky (Indian), who also made me the copy of it given here:

"Chief Cha-we-tsot once owned the 'potlatch' house at the Portage. The drawings on the totem-posts are his 'tomanawis.' The sun, carrying a parcel of valuables in each hand, came to him in a dream and said: 'Your



To-ma-na-wis of Chief Cha-me-tsot.

storehouses (or trunks) will always be full. You will therefore give two more feasts than the average chief; custom had established the rule that the ordinary chief should give three feasts in a lifetime. So Chief Cha-we-tsot built the 'potlatch' house and carved his 'tomanawis' on its totem-posts. He then gave five feasts, two more than the average, as the sun in the vision had commanded him."

These Indians are now Catholics and all attend church every Sunday. When the priest is present he gives his sermon first in English and then in Chenook. When the priest is not present, the Indians pass around within the church from left to right, while they sing and pray a few minutes in

Indian before each of the passion pictures, the altar, and the image of Christ and of the Virgin Mary. Then they quietly leave the church, and, after eating their picnic dinner, go to the Sunday ball game.

Their government school was abandoned this year and their reservation will probably be thrown open this winter.