

INDIAN IMPLEMENTS OF THE NORTH-WEST.

A Dakota puk'-gah-mah-gun.

THE illustrations accompanying the present paper represent a Dakota puk-gah-mah-gun, or war-club. The weapon here figured (fig. 1) was formerly owned and carried by the Sioux chief, Black Bull, then a distinguished personage in Sitting Bull's command. By him it was eventually presented as a valuable token of affection and confidence to a young Ojibwa named Mois-ko-ko'-nia ('Red Robe'), toward whom, in accordance with certain intertribal customs, he had previously assumed the relation of adopted father. This title, it should be observed, does not imply actual interchange of filial and paternal duties, but rather expresses the ex-



FIG. 1.

istence of a purely ideal phase of sentimental friendship on the part of the persons concerned. The recipient is now at the head of one of the seven chieftaincies of the Red Lake band of Ojibwas, living upon Red Lake reservation, in northern Minnesota; and he there disposed of the specimen to its present possessor, Mr. Jonathan Taylor, late sub-agent of the Red-Lakers. The weapon in question is undoubtedly, therefore, a genuine Dakota puk-gah-mah-gun. These implements in general are not only used as weapons of

war, but are also carried in the hand in times of peace, as a sort of ornamental appurtenance — much as a cane is sported by the city exquisite.

The head (fig. 2), which is the essential part of this specimen, is wrought from a stone of a quartzose character. It is symmetrical in outline, has a smooth though unpolished surface, and resembles an egg in form. The two ends are shaped alike, however; and they are produced into obtuse points, which are cleverly adapted to deal a most effective crushing blow, upon the skull for instance. Midway between the points, the head is encircled with a groove about five-eighths of an inch broad, and deep enough to receive the slender hoop of wood by which the head is bound to the staff serving it as a handle. The measurements are as follows: greatest diameter of head, three inches and seven-eighths; least diameter of head, two inches and a quarter; circumference of head corresponding to least diameter, measured at the side of groove, six inches and a half.

The stiff, slender staff is thirty inches in length, and averages about three-quarters of an inch in diameter. It consists of a central stem of wood enveloped in a sheath of leather. A section of the central stem, obtained by splitting, appears to be prolonged beyond the

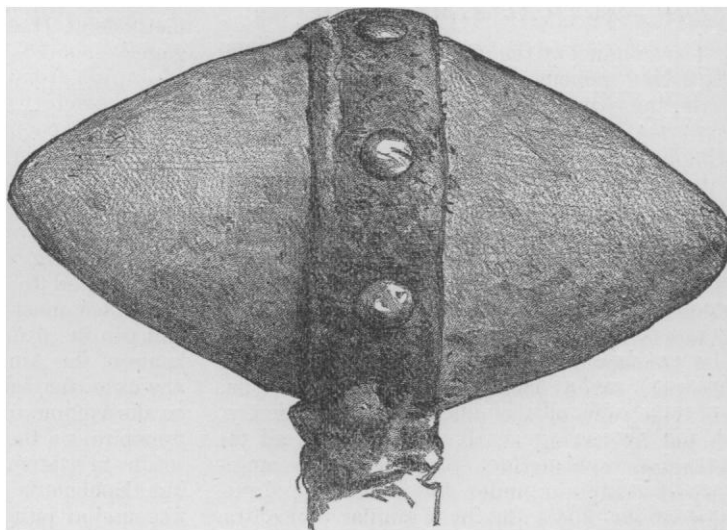


FIG. 2.

staff proper, and, following the groove, to surround the head like a hoop, and extend about twelve inches down the opposite side of the staff; to which, as indicated by certain markings, it is firmly bound. The leathern sheath is simply a strip of hide, closely drawn about

the wood, and overhanded together with sinews in a longitudinal seam. The sheath is terminated at each extremity by a narrow strap: that at the foot of the staff is a mere ornamental appendage. It is perhaps an inch in width by three in length, and is adorned with a tassel of horse-hair attached to it by a leathern string. The upper thong is five-eighths of an inch wide, and encircles the head outside the wooden hoop, following the groove. The free extremity terminates in a long gore, which fits into a corresponding opening at top of sheath, on the side opposite the origin of the thong. It is secured in place by stitches of sinew. An ornamental row of brass-headed nails attaches this thong to the wooden hoop beneath. The straps are cut in one piece with the remainder of the sheath.

The grip, or lower half of the staff, is furnished with a second casing, formed from a belt of bead-work, manufactured of a proper width, and joined along its edges like the inner sheath. This belt is, for the most part, woven in narrow alternating stripes of green and of white beads. The top of the grip, however, consists of a broad band of white, upon which, done in green, figures an Indian, adorned with an eagle-plume, and holding in one hand something, perhaps, intended to simulate a tomahawk. The ribbon attachments shown in the plate have been added by the Ojibwas. Possibly the bead-work envelope may also have been contributed by the latter, as the Ojibwa women are most expert in the art of needle-weaving.

Ojibwa bone-breakers.

I am informed by Ojibwas¹ competent to speak in the matter, and also by other authorities, that an instrument corresponding in several particulars with the one above described was formerly commonly employed for domestic purposes among the Ojibwas. The latter implement is said to be actually in use at the present time, at isolated points where bands, or parts of bands, are yet living, practically, in the 'stone age.' The Ojibwa utensil is named a bone-breaker. It is a coarse implement, having a roundish form, without pointed extremities. It is furnished with a groove, like the Dakota specimen, and it is much the same with that weapon in general size. The stone head is attached to the handle by methods identical with those used in binding the head to the central stem of the puk-gah-mah-gun.

The head of the bone-breaker appears to be the counterpart of a small stone object described and figured by Dr. C. C. Abbott, in his 'Stone age in New Jersey' (see his fig. 312). At least, this figure has at different times been pointed out to me as a bone-breaker by intelligent elderly Ojibwas of Red Lake reservation, to whom, during a summer spent at their agency, I took occasion to exhibit certain of the plates in Dr. Abbott's book.

Very explicit and interesting statements concerning this implement were made by various persons, and particularly by the missionary in charge, Rev. Fred. Smith, an Ojibwa brought up as a 'blanket Indian,' in what is now central Minnesota. In his early youth, Mr. Smith had frequently seen the bone-breaker in service in the family lodge. He had occasionally met with implements of the sort elsewhere, though they have, of late years, fallen into general disuse; but he believed that such were still used by the Red-Lakers of the north shore who are remote from the agency. He had never known this utensil to be employed as a weapon, and thought Dr. Abbott's figure was undoubtedly a bone-breaker. It was used for breaking the bones of game when they could not be parted readily with a knife; as, for instance, in dividing the spoil of hunters, in cutting up meats for cooking, or in distributing food to one's family.

FRANC E. BABBITT.

THE CRUISE OF THE ALBATROSS, FROM CURAÇOA TO ASPINWALL, IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH.¹

WE left Curaçoa at 7.20 A.M., on Feb. 18, and ran a line of soundings in a southerly direction to the mainland, the greatest depth found being 738 fathoms. The government and people of Curaçoa will watch with peculiar interest the result of this line of soundings, as it will go far towards solving the problem of procuring a much-needed supply of fresh water by sinking artesian wells.

The relation this island bears to the mainland has been heretofore unknown; the general impression being that it was an isolated volcanic peak, having no connection with the watershed of the contiguous coast of Venezuela. In this case, water would not be found by sinking artesian wells: on the other hand, if connected with the main by a plateau or neck of land

¹ Ojibwas, or Chippewas. The former term is that by which these people designate themselves: the latter is our corruption of that name.

¹ Abstract of the official report of Lieut.-Commander Z. L. TANNER, commanding, to Prof. S. F. BAIRD, U.S. fish-commissioner. Received through the courtesy of Professor Baird.