

The Anthropological Society

OF WASHINGTON, D. C.

Washington, D. C. Dec 20th 1882

Émile Cartailhac, Esq.,
Toulouse, France.

My Dear Sir:

I have the honor to transmit herewith a brief notice of the Proceedings of the Anthropological Society last evening. The address was delivered by Dr. Robert Fletcher, one of the Vice-Presidents, entitled "Tattooing among civilized nations".

The subject of tattooing has a medico-legal and an ethnological significance. The word was traced to its rendering in various European languages, and the processes employed very minutely given. The question of indelibility was also discussed and the substances enumerated that are most prominent.

Criminals, prostitutes, soldiers, and sailors, most frequently resort to this curious decoration. The parts of the body operated on, and the nature of the designs were fully explained. The Burmese were considered as the most artistic tattooers, as a nation. The availability - and importance of this custom was considered as to its ~~importance~~ value in military surgery, where the main arteries could be indicated upon the extremities, so that the un instructed could apply tourniquet in gun-shot injuries and sabre wounds. Syphilis has been communicated by the professional tattooer, and instances were cited, where a tramp (or loafer) in 1877, who, while traveling through the state of Pennsylvania, subsisted by marking the arms and hands of people. This individual has secondary syphilis, and every case, not previously affected by the disease, presented

evidence of the poisoning.

Dr. Hoffman stated that Tattooing among the Indians was not so common as generally supposed. Some tribes practise the custom, while others are almost ignorant of the subject, using paint instead. The Kiatéramut of Alaska, the Maideu, Tehenma, Sanel and Yokai of Calafornia resort to this method of decoration, but the chief votaries are the women, who draw lines from the corners of the mouth downward to the chin. The men decorate the breasts more frequently than any other parts, if they ~~use~~ tattoo at all. The Diegeñes and Kuvuyas formerly tattooed the face, and any one owning land, would mark the boundary of his property by painting

or carving, upon a tree or post, the same design which he himself wore upon the face, thus almost serving as an autograph.

This is the only instance known among the North American Indians where landmarks bore characters of identification, corresponding to personal ornamentation. Other property, as arrows, blankets, &c., frequently bear some character or mark, by which the owner is able to distinguish it, though scarcely anyone else would be able to do so.

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I have the honor to remain
With Great respect, &c.

W. J. Hoffman M. D.

Curator.

Address.

Bureau of Ethnology.