

for which purpose the poor wretches carry sharpened sticks. One singular fact is the infinite diversity of languages. Not only every tribe, but every band, of which there are sometimes fifty in a single tribe, has its own dialect or jargon, perfectly unintelligible to all who do not belong to the band. In all times the Indians have disdained to learn even a few words of an enemy's language. Stranger yet, the Cheyennes and Arrapahoes for three quarters of a century have been firm friends, camping and hunting together, and making war upon the same enemies at the same times. The children constantly romp and play together in the common camp. Yet not one in ten of either tribe can hold the most ordinary conversation in the language of the other.

Unable to speak one another's language, the Indians of the West have constructed a wonderful sign language, by which they hold intercourse. Gestures, signs, are more or less natural to every one. Among the Plains Indians alone have they reached their most wonderful development. So complicated and elaborate is the sign language, consisting of countless gestures and movements, the slightest variations in which mark wide differences in meaning, that only a few Indians in a tribe are complete masters of it, and the masses can only use it slightly. The signs do not indicate letters, nor words, as with the deaf and dumb, but ideas. There is one sign to indicate hunger, another for "stop talking," another for summer, and so on infinitely. Yet an expert sign talker will either make or interpret a long speech, which consists of an infinite number of signs following each other with lightning-like rapidity. Two strange Indians will meet on horseback, each unable to understand a spoken word of the other, and, while holding the reins with the left hands, will converse for hours with their right, telling stories or relating their experience, without a single misunderstanding.

While remembering that there must be great differences in the customs of a thousand restless bands, which maintain such