

observance of this rite guarded them against precocious infirmities, and prepared them for an active life and success in the chase.

To return to the weaker sex. It was at the time of puberty that the piercing of the lower lip was first practised, preparatory to receiving the labret among the Babines. When, after the insertion of several pieces of bone gradually enlarged, the resulting hole was of the required size, the labret proper, a plug of bone or hard wood, was inserted therein. This Harmon quaintly says had "the shape of the wheel of a pulley". He adds that "as the girls grow up,

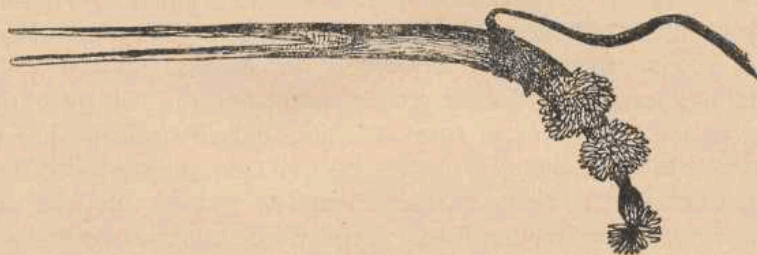


Fig. 64.

this wheel is enlarged, so that a woman of thirty years of age will have one nearly as large as a dollar. This they consider adds much to their beauty; but these wheels are certainly very inconvenient, and to us they appear very uncouth and disagreeable"¹.

I agree with the old fur-trader. A wheel may come very handy when in its proper place; but to have one in the lip must, indeed, have been "very inconvenient". Pity the slaves of fashion, ancient and modern.

Among the Hare Indians, when a girl had attained the age of puberty, her mother would tell her: "If anything of a troubling character should happen to you, put on your cape and hood, and lie down". As soon as she had her first flow, she would therefore cover her head and go off in a hurry to the hut erected for her, as was customary with the other tribes. One of the observances peculiar to the Hares was that, apart from the bonnet or hood proper to her condition², she was made to wear two sticks crossed on her breasts. She was to avoid breaking any rabbit bone, and for a whole month she had to abstain from eating the heart and blood of all animals, as well as from fish-roe and fat³.

Among the Pacific and Southern Dénés.

The puberty customs of the Tsetsaut, that remnant of a Déné tribe now stationed on Portland Inlet, vary somewhat from those above enumerated, though they testify to the same dread of the malign forces inherent to menstruation. According to Dr. Boas, when one of their girls reaches maturity,

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 266. The labret was also worn by some Yukon tribes (Dall, "Masks and Labrets", p. 151).

² Fr. Petitot calls it a *capulet*.

³ Cf. Petitot, *Traditions Indiennes du Canada Nord-Ouest*, pp. 247—249.