

THE INDIAN SWEAT HOUSE.

The Digger Indians, of California, are in the habit of treating rheumatism, and all bilious affections, by sweating the patient. To do this, they have in all their villages or *rancheries* what may be termed a sweat house. It is made as follows: A circular excavation is made in the earth from twelve to twenty feet in diameter and about two feet deep. Poles are set at the outer edges of this excavation in such a manner that the tops meet over the center, each pole standing at an angle of about forty-five degrees. Over these poles there is laid a coating of brush, straw, and earth. There is a hole left in the roof midway between the ground and the peak, about twenty inches square, through which they pass in and out of the house.

When it is desired to give or take a sweat, the Indian builds a fire in the center of the sweat house, the smoke passing out through the above mentioned opening. He then removes his garments, and in a short time is in a profuse perspiration.

A few years since, it was customary for all the members of the Indian village to take a sweat every few weeks, in which case fire was unnecessary. As many as could be huddled would enter, and in a few moments their bodies would generate sufficient

heat to induce profuse perspiration. Some of these houses would hold from fifty to a hundred persons.

The Chippewa and other Indian tribes of Michigan, for many years, have used sweat-baths in treating fevers and congestions. They place poles in the ground in such a position that, when covered with skins or blankets, a conical tent is formed about six feet in high with a base of about six feet. The patient is then placed in this tent, also a pail of water into which red-hot stones are placed, thus forming a most perfect vapor-bath.

The above description has not been given with the idea of recommending the use of the sweat house, but to show that the plan of depurating the system through the skin in treating certain forms of disease is well understood and practiced by some of the lowest classes of human beings.

The Hygienic Family Physician: A Complete Guide for the Preservation of Health, and the Treatment of the Sick without Medicine, pg. 184-185 by M. G. Kellogg