

TO PRESERVE LANGUAGE.

The Novel Use the Edison Phonograph Has Been Put To.

The present state of perfection of the Edison phonograph led me, writes J. Walter Fewkes, in *Nature*, to attempt some experiments with it on our New England Indians, as a means of preserving languages which are rapidly becoming extinct. I accordingly made a visit to Calais, Me., and was able, through the kindness of Mrs. W. Wallace Brown, to take upon the phonograph a collection of records illustrating the language, folk-lore, songs, and counting-out rhymes of the Passamaquoddy Indians. My experiments met with complete success, and I was able not only to take the records, but also to take them so well that the Indians themselves recognized the voices of other members of the tribe who had spoken the day before.

One of the most interesting records which was made was the song of the snake dance, sung by Noel Josephs, who is recognized by the Passamaquoddies as the best acquainted of all with this song "of old time." He is always the leader in the dance, and sang it in the same way as at its last celebration.

I also took upon the same wax cylinder on which the impressions are made his account of the dance, including the invitation which precedes the ceremony.

In addition to the song of the snake dance, I obtained on the phonograph an interesting "trade song," and a "Mohawk war song" which is very old. Several other songs were recorded. Many very interesting old folk tales were also taken. In some of those there occurred ancient songs with archaic words, imitations of the voices of animals, old and young. An ordinary conversation between two Indians, and a counting-out rhyme are among the records made.

I found the schedules of the United States Bureau of Ethnology of great value in my work, adopted the method of giving Passamaquoddy and English words consecutively on the cylinder.

The records were all numbered, and the announcement of the subject made on each in English. Some of the stories filled several cylinders, but there was little difficulty in making the changes necessary to pass from one to the other, and the Indians, after some practice, were able to "make good records" in the instrument. Thirty-six cylinders were taken in all. One space is sufficient for most of the songs and for many of the short stories. The longest story taken was a folk-tale, which occupies nine cylinders, about "Podump" and "Jook-jin-Squiss," the "Black Cat and the Load Woman," which has never been published. In a detailed report of my work with the phonograph in preserving the Passamaquoddy language, I hope to give a translation of the interesting story.