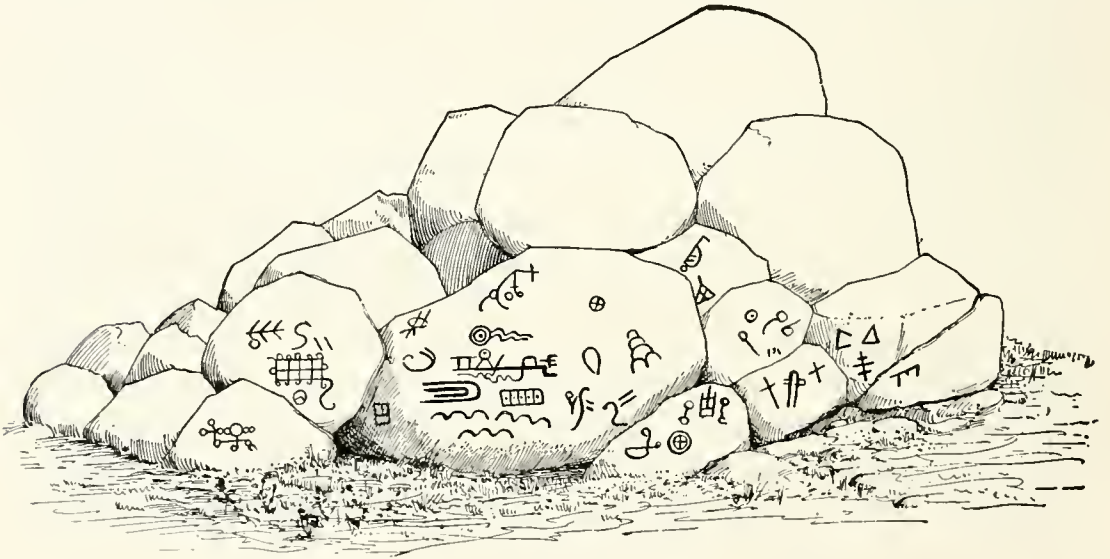


THE CROSS AMONG THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS.

BY THE EDITOR.

THE significance of the cross among the North Americans has received much attention from the various investigators of the Bureau of Ethnology and the Smithsonian Institution, and we are



RATTLESNAKE ROCK, MOJAVE DESERT, CALIFORNIA.

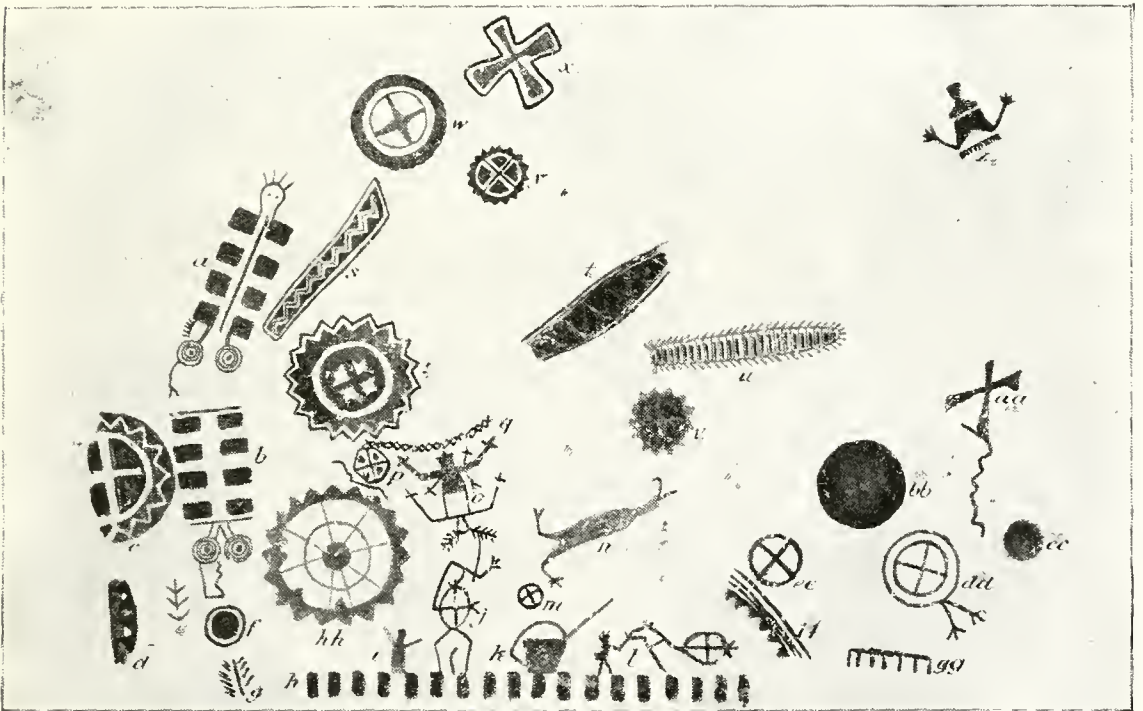
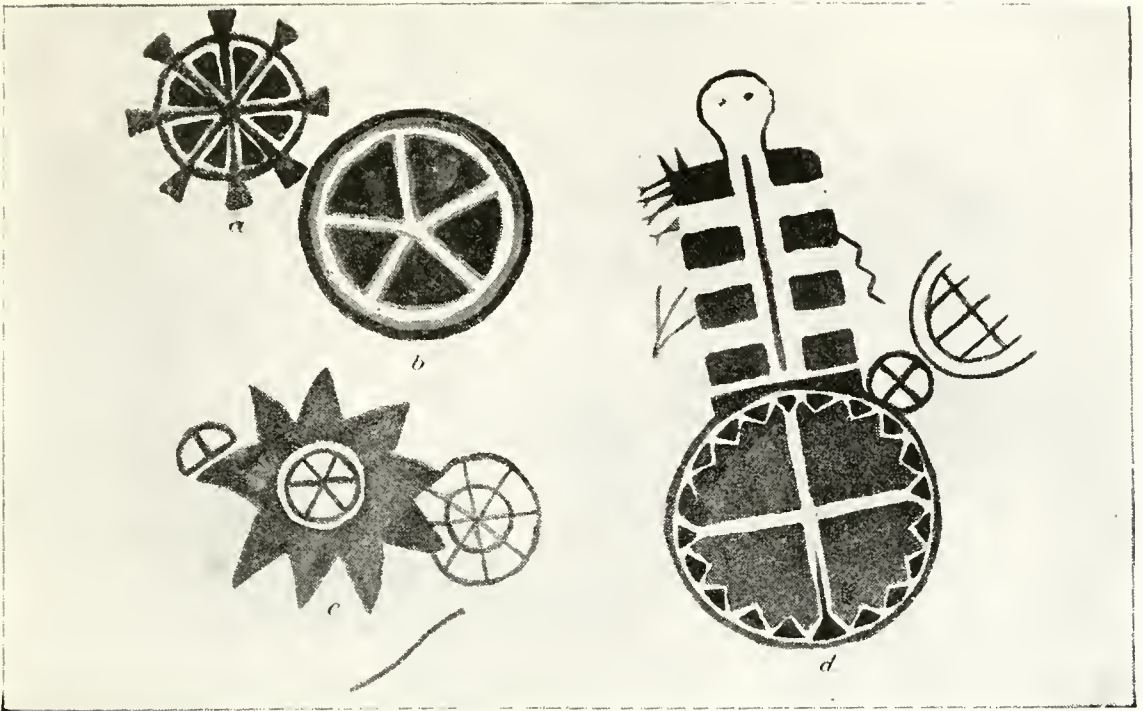
Containing one Latin (\dagger), one Greek (\oplus), one treble (\ddagger), and one disc (\oplus) cross.

led to the conclusion that here as in Mexico the cross was one of the commonest religious symbols. To be sure, we must be careful not to accept crosses as genuinely Indian unless they are of undoubted pre-Christian origin. Says Mr. William H. Holmes:¹

“From the time of La Salle down to the extinction of the savage in the middle Mississippi province, the cross was kept constantly before him [the Indian], and its presence may thus be accounted for in such remains as post-date the advent of the whites. Year after year articles of European manufacture are being discovered in the most unexpected places, and we shall find it impossible to assign any single

¹ Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1880, p. 269.

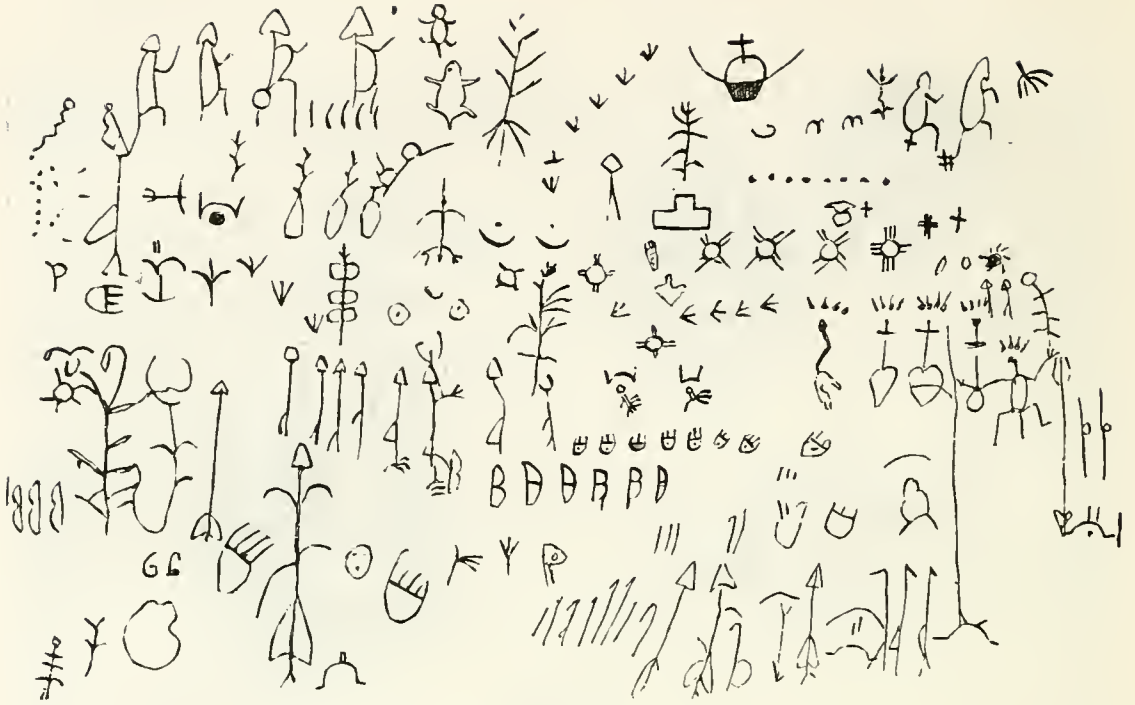
example of these crosses to a prehistoric period, with the assurance that our statements will not some day be challenged. It is certainly unfortunate that the Amer-



PETROGLYPHS IN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA.¹
 [With wheel stars and wheel crosses.]

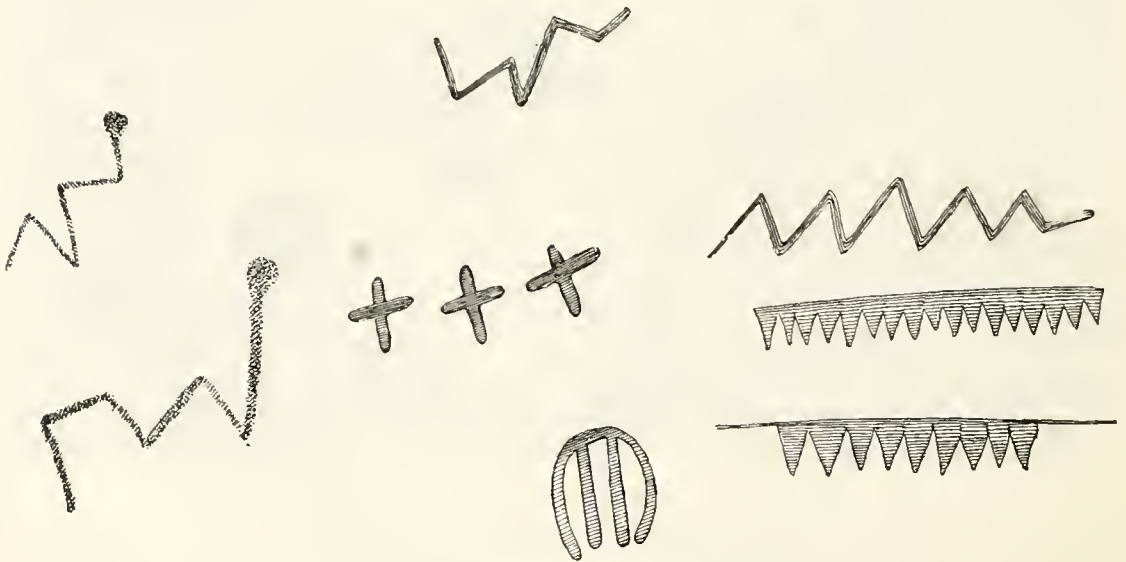
ican origin of any work of art resembling European forms must rest forever under a cloud of suspicion. As long as a doubt exists in regard to the origin of a relic, it

¹ *A. R.*, 88-89, figs. 32 and 33, pp. 70 and 71.

PETROGLYPHS AT OAKLEY SPRING, ARIZONA.¹

[It is impossible to give an incontrovertible explanation of the various disc-crosses, some of which stand and others slant.

The cross on the heart which occurs several times will at once remind us of the Egyptian symbol of the same appearance. It is probably a coincidence without any significance, for it is used to represent a cross-bearing mask. Cf. *A. R.*, 88-89, pp. 505-506.]

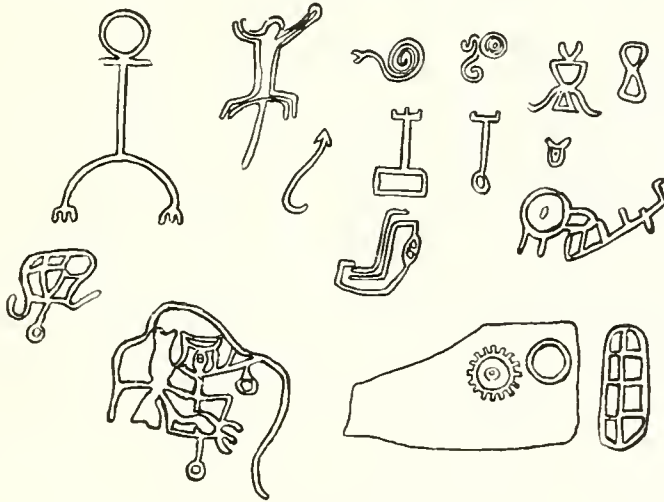
PETROGLYPHS NEAR SAN MARCOS PASS, CALIFORNIA.²

¹ *A. R.*, 88-89, fig. 437, p. 329.

² *A. R.*, 88-89, p. 63.

is useless to employ it in a discussion where important deductions are to be made. At the same time it should not be forgotten that the cross was undoubtedly used as a symbol by the prehistoric nations of the South, and consequently that it was probably also known in the North. A great majority of the relics associated with it in ancient mounds and burial-places are undoubtedly aboriginal."

While we must be very careful not to build theories on its significance, there can be no doubt about the prevalence of the



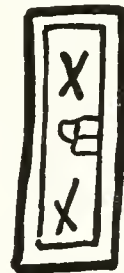
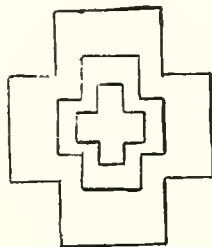
BRAZILIAN PETROGLYPHS.¹

One figure is in its upper part similar to the Egyptian key of life.

Indian cross all over the continent. Most of the rock-inscriptions, the petroglyphs so called, contain crosses of all sizes and shapes, some of which are solar symbols (e. g., those of Oakley Springs, Arizona), others are meant to be stars (e. g., the crosses of the



NICARAGUA CROSSES (ISLAND OF CEIBA)
REPRESENTING RAIN.²



MAYA SYMBOL WITH CROSSES,
SIGNIFYING WOOD.³

Eskimo), or clouds, or symbols of rain ; still others represent animals, such as alligators, or birds in flight, or men with outstretched arms.

Mr. Holmes has collected a great number of representations of the cross without being able to come to a definite conclusion or explanation. He says:

¹A. R., 88-89, fig. 1113, p. 692. ²A. R., 88-89, fig. 1234, p. 730. ³A. R., 88-89, fig. 1233, p. 729.

"In all the examples given it is a simple and symmetrical cross, which might be duplicated a thousand times in the religious art of any country. A study of the designs associated with the cross in these gorgets is instructive, but does not lead



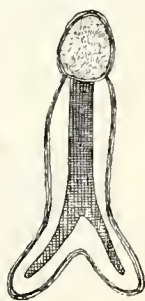
SPIDER-GORGET FROM A STONE GRAVE IN ST. CLAIR COUNTY, ILLINOIS.¹

Atta, but there appears to be good reason for believing otherwise. The cross here shown has a very highly conventionalised character, quite out of keeping with the realistic drawing of the insect, and, what is still more decisive, it is identical with forms found upon many other objects. The conclusion is that the cross here, as elsewhere, has a symbolic character."

to any definite result. In one case the cross is inscribed upon the back of a great spider; in another it is surrounded by a rectangular framework of lines, looped at the corners, and guarded by four mysterious birds, while in others it is without attendant characters; but the workmanship is purely aboriginal."

Concerning the cross on the back of the spider, Mr. Holmes says (*A. R.*, 80-81, pp. 287-8):

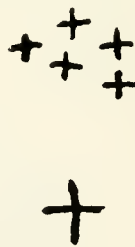
"It has been suggested that it may have been derived from the well-defined cross found upon the backs of some species of the genus



PETROGLYPHS IN NAJOWE VALLEY, CALIFORNIA.²



THE CROSS OF THE SUN.³



CROSSES OF THE ESKIMO.

Mr. Garrick Mallery says in the tenth annual report, 1888-89, p. 724:

"The 'Greek' (i. e., the equilateral) cross represents to the Dakota the four winds, which issue from the four caverns in which the souls of men existed before their incarnation in the human body. All 'medicine men,' i. e., conjurers and magicians, recollect their previous dreamy life in those places and the instructions then received from the gods, demons, and sages. They recollect and describe their pre-existent life, but only dream and speculate as to the future life beyond the grave.

¹ *A. R.*, 80-81, Plate LXI, facing p. 288.

³ *A. R.*, 88-89, fig. 1123, p. 696.

² *A. R.*, 88-89, fig. 28, p. 67.

⁴ *A. R.*, 88-89, fig. 1228, p. 727.

"The top of the cross is the cold all-conquering giant, the North-wind, most powerful of all. It is worn on the body nearest the head, the seat of intelligence



SPIDER-GORGET FROM MOUNDS IN ST. CLAIR COUNTY, ILLINOIS.¹

and conquering devices. The left arm covers the heart; it is the East-wind, coming from the seat of life and love. The foot is the melting burning South-wind, in-



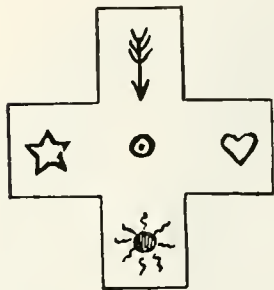
SPIDER-GORGET FROM A MOUND IN MISSOURI.

dicating, as it is worn, the seat of fiery passion. The right arm is the gentle West wind, blowing from the spirit-land, covering the lungs, from which the breath at

¹*A. R.*, 80-81, Plate LXI, facing p. 288.

last goes out, gently, but into unknown night. The centre of the cross is the earth and man, moved by the conflicting influences of the gods and winds.

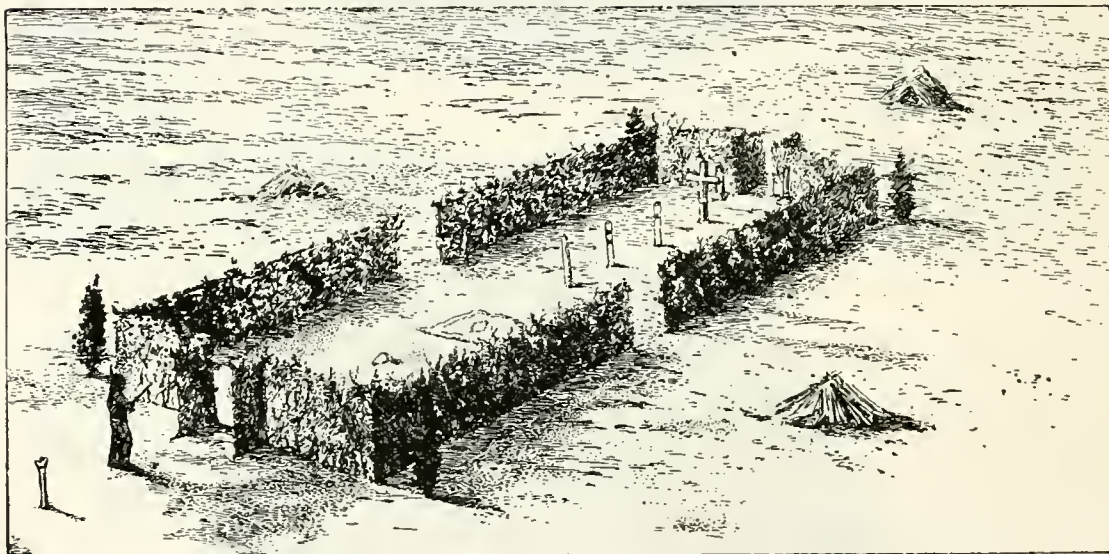
" Among the Ojibwa of northern Minnesota the cross is one of the sacred symbols of the society of the Midê or shamans, and has special reference to the fourth degree. A neophyte who has been advanced to the third initiation or degree, is instructed in ritualistic chants purporting to relate the struggle between Mi'nabô'zho, the mediator between the Ojibwa and Ki'tshi Ma'nidô, and the malevolent Bear spirit, which contest occurred when Mi'nabô'zho entered the fourth degree structure at the time when the first Indian was inducted therein for initiation.



THE EQUILATERAL CROSS
OF THE DAKOTA.

" The structure as erected at this day is built in the form of an oblong square having openings or doors at the four cardinal points. At these openings Mi'nabô'zho appeared and shot into the inclosure charmed arrows,

to expel the horde of demons occupying the sacred place, and the Bear spirit was the last to yield to his superior powers. The openings being opposite to one an-



THE CROSS IN THE MEDICINE LODGE.

other, north and south and east and west, suggested to Mi'nabô'zho the cross, which is now erected whenever a third degree Midê receives this last and highest honor.



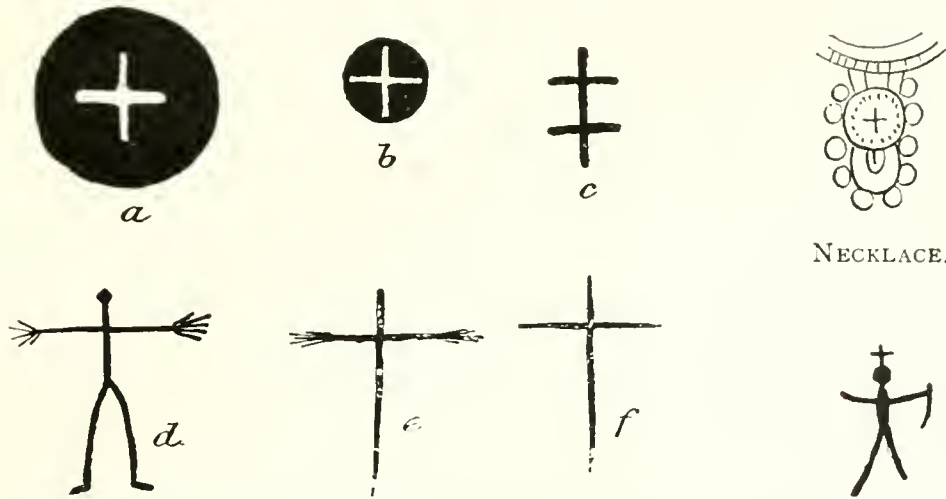
THE CHRISTIAN LABARUM.



AN AMERICAN LABARUM.

" The cross is made of saplings, the upright pole reaching the height of four to six feet, the transverse arms being somewhat shorter, each being of the same length as that part of the pole between the arms and the top. The upper parts are painted white, or besmeared with white clay, over which are spread small spots of red, the

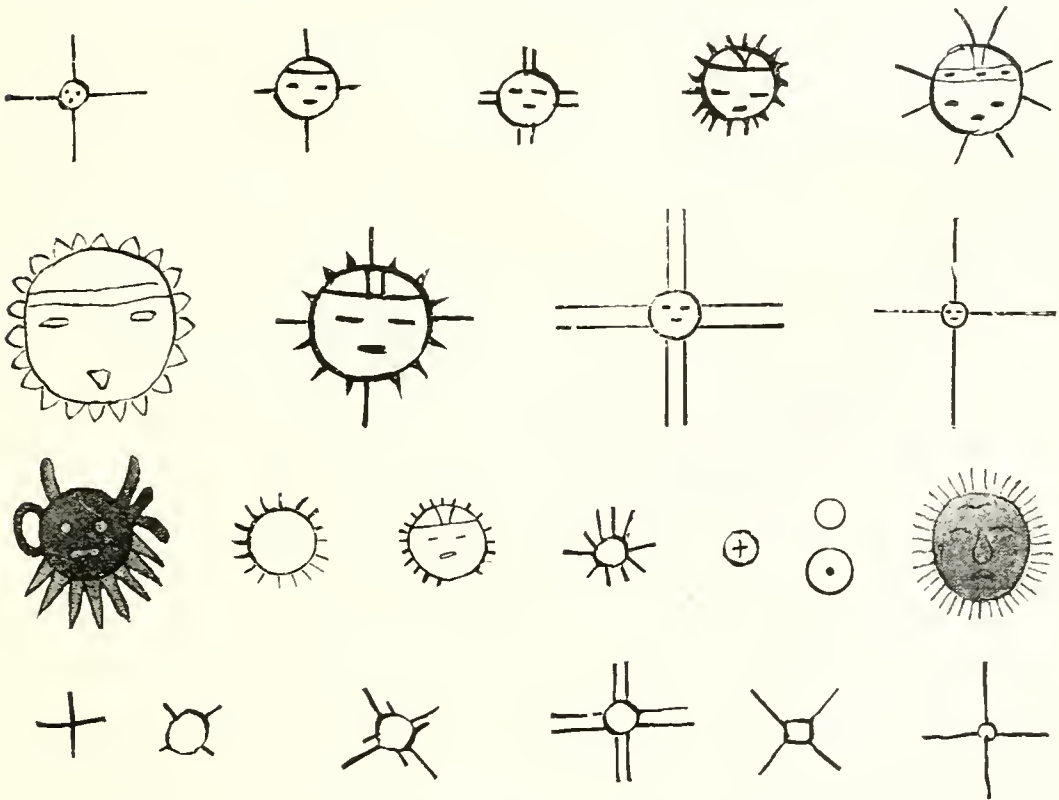
latter suggesting the sacred shell, or m \acute{e} gis, the symbol of the order. The lower arm or pole is squared, the surface toward the east being painted white, to denote the



SOME OF THE ROCK SCULPTURES DISCOVERED IN OWENS VALLEY, SOUTH OF BENTON, CALIFORNIA.¹

REPRESENTING A MEDICINE MAN.

source of light and warmth. The face on the south is green, denoting the source of the thunder bird who brings the rains and causes the appearance of vegetation ; the surface toward the west is covered with vermilion and relates to the land of the



SIGNS OF THE SUN AND OF STARS.² (Oakley Springs, Arizona ; and other places.)

setting sun, the abode of the dead. The north is painted black, as that faces the direction from which come affliction, cold, and hunger."

¹A. R., 88-89, fig. 1230, p. 728.

²A. R., 88-89, scattered on pp. 694-697.

The Maltese cross (✠) is a symbol of virginity among the Moki, and is worn in the hair by the maidens of the tribe, but its shape is frequently conventionalised into a simple cross.

Among the Kiate'xamut, an Inuit tribe, the medicine man wears on his head a cross which represents the demon that is under his control.



SHELL-GORGET OF THE MISSISSIPPI MOUND-BUILDERS.¹

That the Indian prayer-stick bears a certain resemblance to the cross is immaterial, but may be mentioned as a strange coincidence.

The characters scratched on the prayer-stick are the picture writing which continued in use long after the arrival of the whites, and of which interesting instances are quoted in the "Jesuit Rela-

¹*A. R.*, 80-81, Plate LVIII, facing p. 282. Similar designs of four birds' heads with a sun and a cross in the centre are frequently found in North America. For other specimens and further comments see William H. Holmes's essay, *Art in Shell of the Ancient Americans*, *A. R.*, 80-81, pp. 179-305.

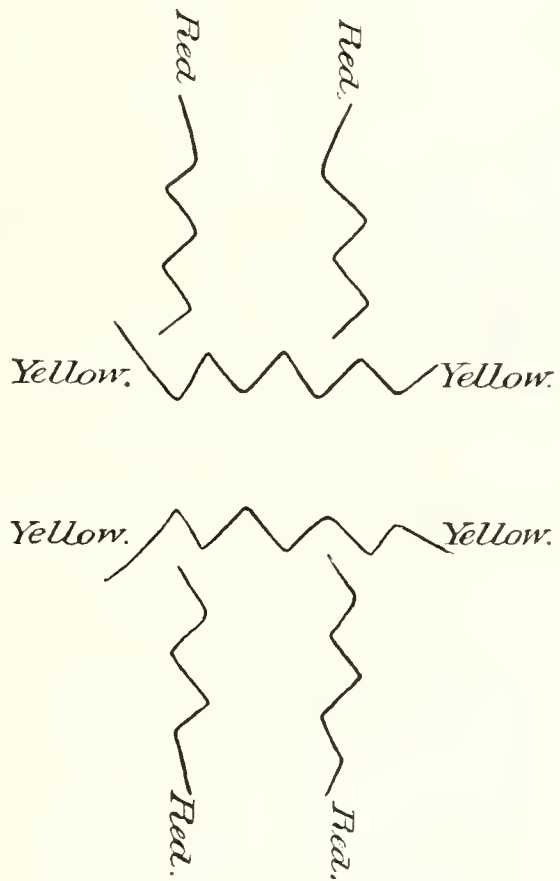
tions of 1646" of the Algonquins of the St. Lawrence river and by Charles Wiener in his *Péron et Bolive* (1880).

Crosses of various descriptions, painted on buckskin, are used as phylacteries. We reproduce two of them. The zigzag lines of the one represent snakes, and the cross formed by them was called by the owner "the black wind." The significance of the other cross has not been determined. Both pieces of buckskin contained a number of mysterious things which were tightly wrapped and deemed to be of great efficacy.

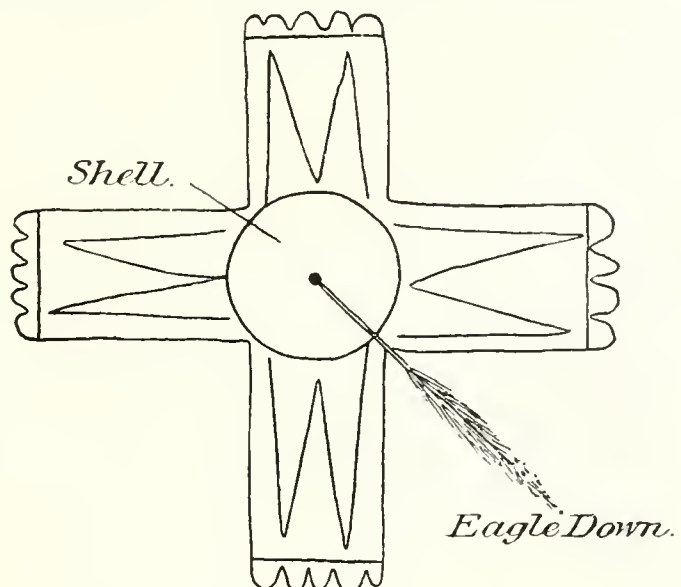
The most interesting crosses, the arms of which are painted in different colors, are found on medicine sashes and shirts. The Ethnological Bureau possesses several fine specimens, and we reproduce here as an interesting example the design of an Apache mantle of invisibility, of which Mr. Mallery says:

"It is a cloak or mantle made from the skin of a deer, and covered with various mystic paintings. It was made and used by the Apaches as a mantle of invisibility, that is, a charmed covering for spies which would enable them to pass with impunity through the country, and even through the camp of their enemies. The fetishistic power depends upon the devices drawn." (*A. R.*, 1888-1889, p. 503.)

Another magic mantle is described as follows:



PHYLACTERIES DRAWN ON BUCKSKIN



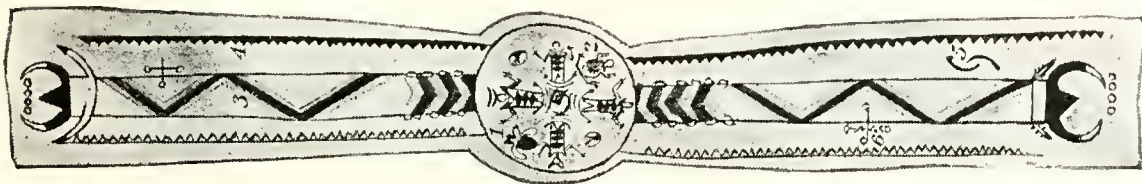
PHYLACTERY.



APACHE MANTLE OF INVISIBILITY.¹

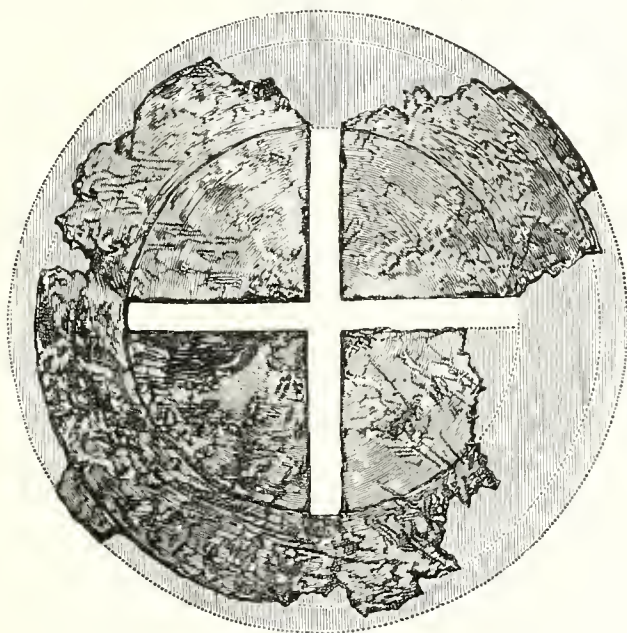
¹From *A. R.*, 88-89, Plate XXXIII, facing p. 504.

"A similar but not identical pictographic fetish or charm is described and illustrated by Capt. Bourke as obtained from a Chicarahua Apache, which told when his ponies were lost, and which brought rain. The symbols show, inter alia, the rain cloud, and the serpent lightning, the raindrops and the cross of the winds of the four cardinal points." (*Ibid.*)



APACHE MEDICINE SASH.¹

The cross which appears in the Apache medicine sash, reproduced from Mr. Bourke's essay on "Medicine Shirts and Sashes" (*A. R.*, 1887-1888, p. 593), consists of four demons standing in the four quarters of the world. Between them four amulets can be seen, a hoddentin bag containing sacred flour (1), a crab (2), and two other things. From this central place, which I deem to be the home of the winds, streaks of lightning, called Tzi-Daltai (3), issue on either side in the form of zigzag lines, ending in heads reminding one somewhat of a pinchbug. The saw-like streaks may represent thunder.²



CROSS ON A COPPER PLATE FOUND IN AN OHIO MOUND.³

Two Apache medicine shirts are most beautifully reproduced in colors by the Bureau of Ethnology in their *Annual Report*, 1887-1888 (Plates VII. and VIII.). The centre of the one shows a Maltese cross whose arms are blue, green, red, and yellow; the other exhibits among many curious designs in a most prominent position a bluish, equilateral cross mounted on a ball divided into four quadrants which are black, red, blue, and yellow. Thus the whole figure presents the appearance of the cross-bearing globe

¹ *A. R.*, 87-88, fig. 448, p. 593.

² I am unable to explain the curved lines at (5) and the two little crosses, one of which is marked (6).

³ *A. R.*, 88-89, fig. 1226, p. 725.

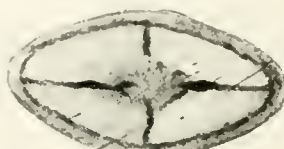
such as is used by European monarchs as an emblem of royal power.



THE STORY OF CHRIST IN PERUVIAN PICTOGRAPHY BEFORE THE INVENTION OF WRITING.¹

Mr. Bourke says of the medicine-shirts:

"The symbolism is different for each one, but may be generalised as typical of the sun, moon, stars, rainbow, lightning, snake, clouds, rain, hail, tarantula, centipede, snake, and some one or more of the 'kan' or gods."



CROSSES ON DICE (used for playing dice).

Considering the many things a cross stands for, we must expect to find it in the pictographic writing of the American Indians; and a glance at a sample of an old Peruvian manuscript found at

¹ *A. R.*, 88-89, p. 672. The same method of writing prevailed in North America.

Sicasica in the valley of Pancactambo, given by Wiener, amply justifies this assumption.

Pictography prevailed also among the North American Indians before the invention of writing in letters, and the first accounts of the story of Christ were written by the natives in this manner.

"Connected with this topic is the following account in the *Jesuit Relations of 1676*, p. 31, relative to the Montagnais and other Algonquins of the St. Lawrence river, near the Saguenay: 'They confess themselves with admirable frankness; some of them carry small sticks to remind them of their sins; others write after their manner, on small pieces of bark.'"



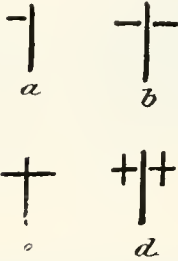
SICASICA MANUSCRIPT. PICTURE WRITING OF AMERICAN INDIANS.¹

The cross is a symbol of varying significance, and we must be on our guard before we identify its usage in diverse parts of the world and even on the same continent. One instance will be sufficient to show how easy it is to make a mistake and how ridiculous and preposterous a substitution of our own views and associations for the notions of other people may become. Mr. Garrick Mallery gives the following explanation of the significance of the Latin cross among the Dakota Indians :

"The same disposition of straight lines which is called the Latin cross was and is used by the Dakota to picture or signify both in pictograph and gesture sign, the mosquito-hawk, more generally called dragon-fly. The Susbeca or mosquito-

¹A. R., 88-89, p. 672. The designs are red and blue.

hawk is a supernatural being. He is gifted with speech. He warns men of danger. He approaches the ear of the man moving carelessly or unconcernedly through the deep grass of the meadow or marsh—approaches his ear silently and at right angles, and says to him, now alarmed, 'Tci'-'tci'-'tci!'—which is an interjection equivalent to 'Look out!' 'You are surely going to destruction!' 'Look out!' 'Tci'-'tci'-'tci!'

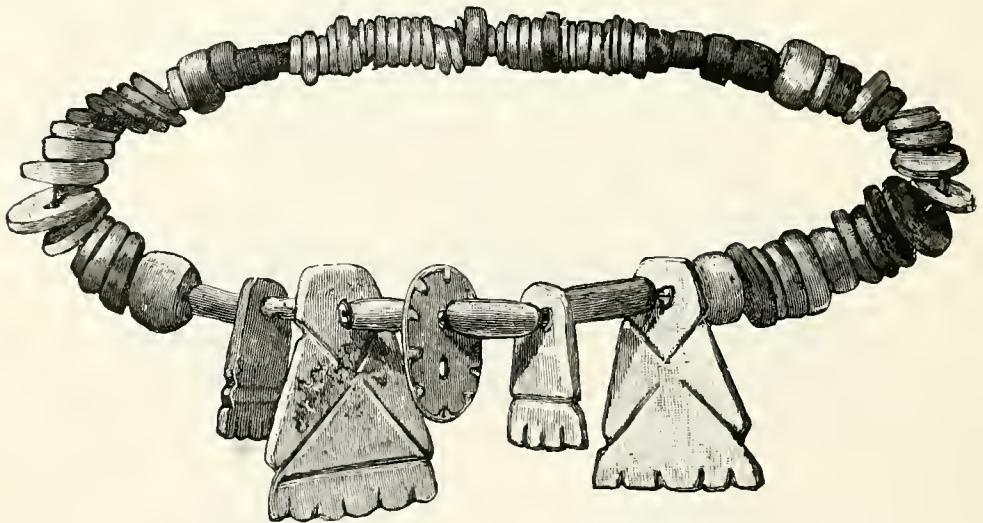


THE DRAGON FLY
CROSSES OF THE
DAKOTA.¹

"Now the mosquito-hawk is easily knocked down and caught and has a temptingly small neck. But woe to the man or woman or child who with the cruelty commonly practiced on all living things by Indians of all ages and states, dares to wring off his head. Whoever shall do this, before the winter comes shall be beheaded by the detested Ojibwa. It is true, for long ago a reckless young warrior feeling annoyed or insulted by the infernal 'Tci'-'tci'-'tci!' so unceremoniously uttered in explosive breaths near his ear, tried it, and his headless trunk was found ere he escaped from the swamp.

"The cross has its proper significance in this use not only in representing quite faithfully the shape of the insect but also the angle of his approach.

"One reason for the adoption of the dragon-fly as a mysterious and supernatural being, is on account of its sudden appearance in large numbers. When in the still of the evening, before the shades of darkness come, there is heard from the meadow a hum as of the sound of crickets or frogs, but indistinct and prolonged; on the morrow the Susbeca will be hovering over it; it is the sound of their coming, but whence no man kens."



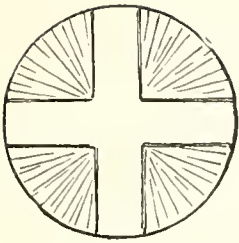
ANCIENT BEAD BRACELET OF PERU.² [The Maltese crosses represent birds.]

Mr. Mallery prefaces this explanation of the cross as the symbol of the mosquito-hawk with these remarks:

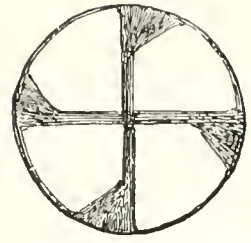
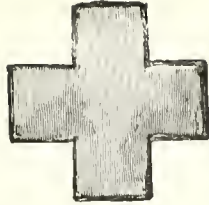
"The use of this symbol antedates the discovery of America, and is carried far back in tradition and myth. When a missionary first asked a Dakota the name of this figure, which he drew for him in the sand, wishing to use the information in his translation of Bible and Creed, the Dakota promptly replied Sus-be-ca

¹A. R., 88-89, p. 725.

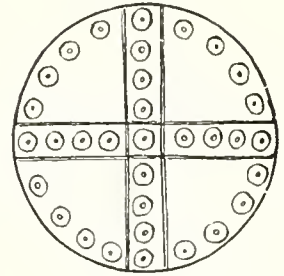
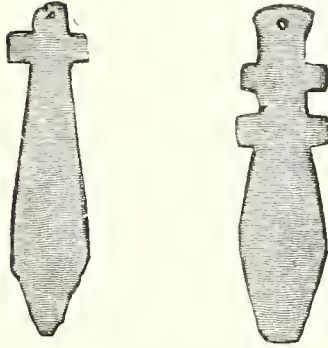
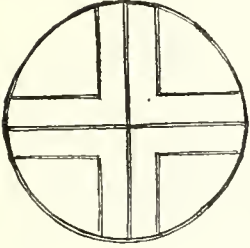
²A. R. 80-81, plate XLV, facing p. 256.



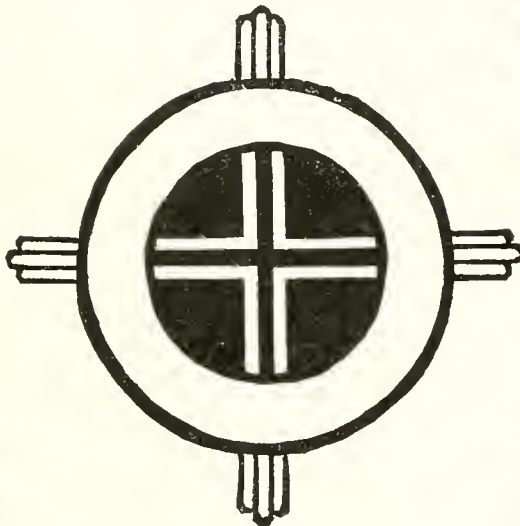
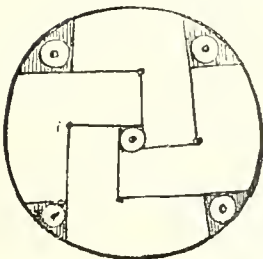
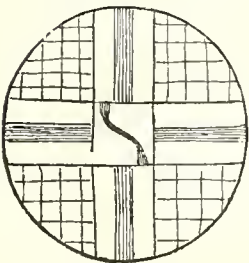
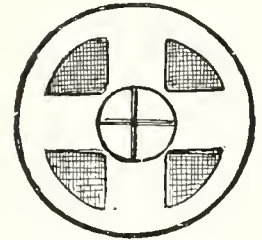
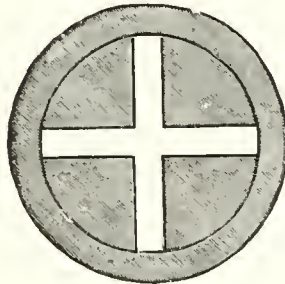
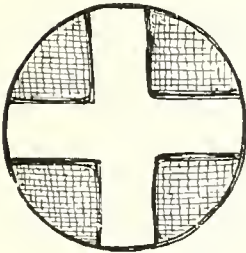
Solar Cross.



An American Swastika.



Prayer-sticks.



Symbol of the Whirlwind

CROSSES FOUND IN THE MOUNDS AND ANCIENT GRAVES IN THE DISTRICT OF THE MOUND-BUILDERS.¹

¹*A. R.*, 80-81, Plate LIII., facing p. 272. Of these crosses 8 are engraved on shell-gorgetts, 1 is cut in stone, 3 are painted on pottery, and 4 are executed in copper. The last one, in the right hand corner at the bottom, is a symbol of the whirlwind (cf. *A. R.*, 88-89, p. 605).

and retraced the figure saying 'That is a Sus-be-ca.' It was therefore promptly transferred to Scripture and Creed, where it still reads 'He was nailed to the Sus-be-ca,' etc. 'God forbid that I should glory save in the Susbeca of our Lord Jesus Christ.' To the good missionary this was plain and satisfactory; for the Dakota had demonstrated by tracing it in the sand that Susbeca was the name of the figure called in English, 'cross.' But when the Dakota read his new Bible or Creed, he must have been puzzled or confused to find, 'He was nailed to a mosquito-hawk,' or, 'God forbid that I should glory save in the mosquito-hawk of our Lord Jesus Christ.'"

While it is quite true that we have no positive evidence to prove the pre-Christian workmanship of the many crosses discovered among the North American Indians, there is no good reason to doubt the indigenous and ancient character of the various cross-forms themselves in the sense in which they are still in use. For the medicine man of the Indian is very conservative, probably even more conservative than the priesthood of any other nation. Says Mr. Bourke: "Never desirous of winning proselytes to his own ideas, he [the medicine man] has held on to those ideas with a tenacity never suspected until purposely investigated."

We may say, in fine, that the cross among the Indians of North America had several meanings of a deeply mystical significance, prominent among which is the idea that it represents the four quarters of the world; yet this thought is not geographical but religious, indicating in the medicine lodge as well as in symbols and in nature at large the divine presence of a spiritual helpfulness and special protection to those who employ the proper methods of conjuration.