

THE MUSKEE-KEE WIN-NI-NEE.

THE MEDICINE-MAN OF THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS.

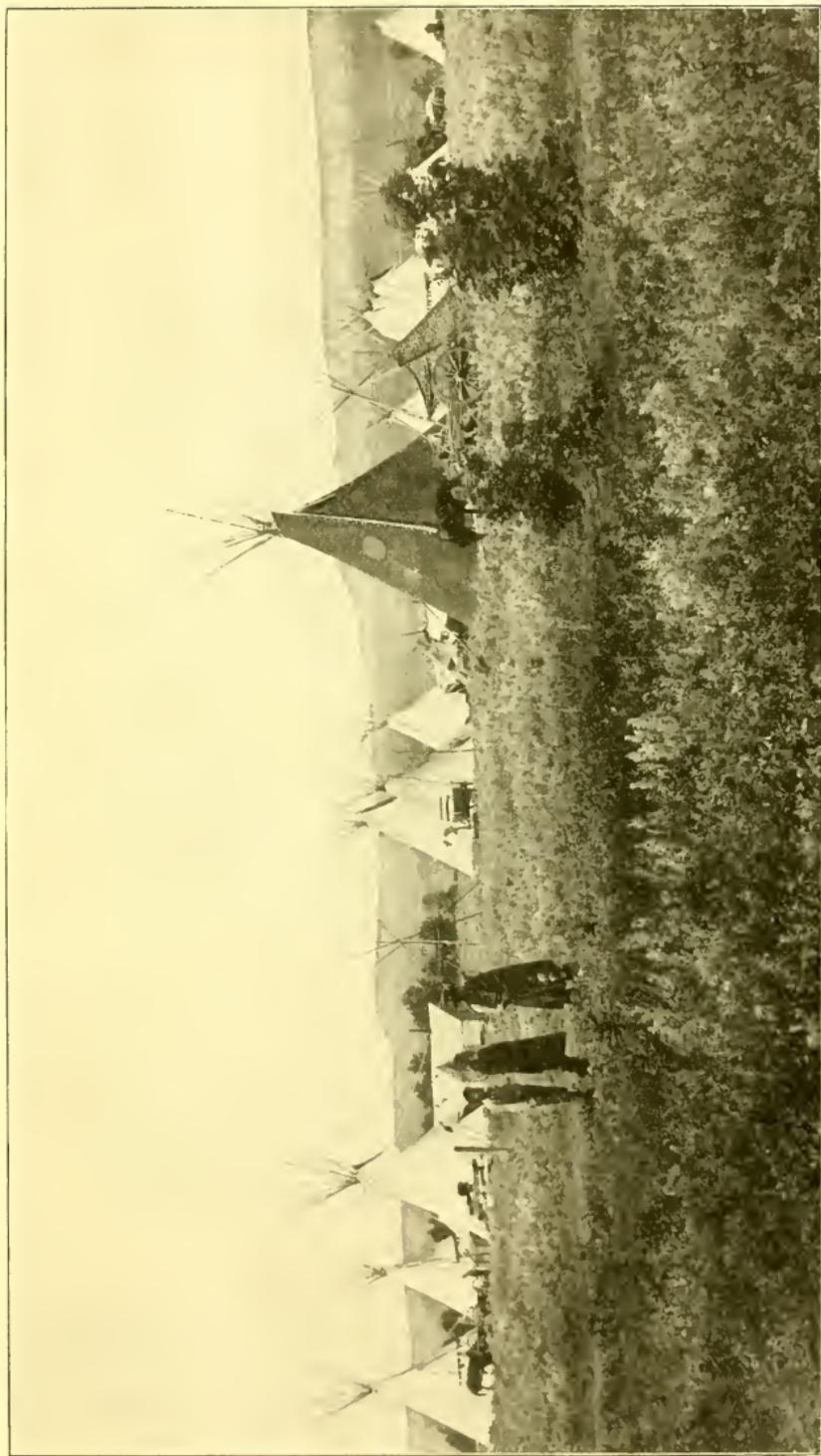
BY W. THORNTON PARKER, M. D.

THE medicine-man among all North American Indians is a person of conspicuous importance, as he is supposed to possess control over mysterious agencies, and to be endowed with powers well-nigh supernatural. He is believed to be not only under the influence of spirits of great power, but to have more or less control over them, compelling their aid for weal or woe, upon friend or enemy. He is also supposed to be able to interpret signs of major or minor import, and to foretell the severity or mildness of approaching seasons, and the appropriateness of time for expeditions concerned in the chase, or in war.

These doctors, magicians, prophets, dreamers, or whatever the medicine-man may be conceived to be, are prepared for their skilful profession only after long and arduous training. The tests necessary for recognition as skilful and responsible practitioners are often very severe and exacting, requiring physical endurance and bravery of no mean order. These ordeals or tests when completed endow the medicine-man with magical and mysterious powers of cure and prophecy, acknowledged by all the tribes.

Oftentimes the renown of these men will have spread among other tribes and even among other nations, Indians making long journeys to consult and listen to the distinguished Shaman: Young men who are seeking to become great prophets travel far for the instruction of those celebrated in the mythical arts; but such instances are by no means common, as each tribe has its own system of arriving at results.

The medicine-lodge is believed by many to be the actual habitation of the Great Spirit; it is as it were their tabernacle, or Sacred



BLACK LODGE CAMP (CROW). Red medicine-teepes with painted characters upon it, right centre of photograph.

Ark in the wilderness. Col. Inman in his *Salt Lake Trail* thus describes the influence of the medicine-lodge :

“When the prophecies of these medicine-men fail, the Indians “attribute it to some neglect of the instructions imparted, and not “to any deficiency in their medicine-man; but when success occurs, “great is the honor bestowed upon their prophet. Their confidence “in these medicine-men is really remarkable.”

The Indian believes in the immortality of the soul, and in his dreams and in the semi-delirium of sicknesses or accidents gains an insight into future mysteries, and has glimpses of the beauties and happiness of the life to come. It is not to be wondered at therefore that to his prophets he attributes great discernment in these and all other matters of importance.

Among the Ojibways the commonest form of greeting is *Bo-zho-nee-chee*. *Bo-zho* is undoubtedly a corruption of the French, *Bon jour*, which thick-mouthed French voyageurs have repeated in the hearing of Indians; and so after centuries the words *Bo-zho* have become almost universal among Algonquin Indians, or those living along the Great Lakes and upon the Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio rivers. So early trappers witnessed the wonderful influence of the medicine-men and also saw that these possessors of supernatural powers made use of it in healing diseased bodies, as well as in controlling the mind and spirit. They therefore called these men *médecin*, or doctor.

From calling them doctor or *médecin* it was an easy transition to call their power by the same name, and the similarity in sounds of the English and the French words made the term readily adapted by the English-speaking people. So at last *medicine-man* came to mean the man having mysterious power over medicine or magic or mysterious arts in general; and the medicine-man controlling the medicine, and some medicine being good, some evil, certain things came to be called “good medicine” or “bad medicine,” and certain occurrences to be “good medicine” or “bad medicine,” in other words “propitious” or “unpropitious.”

Traditions have also been in the keeping, as it were, of the medicine-men. Colonel Inman, in his *Salt Lake Trail*, mentions that the Indians of North America or most of them have a tradition of a great flood or deluge which occurred ages ago. While on the expedition of General Carr, in 1869, when Buffalo Bill (Cody) was Chief of Scouts, a member of the command brought into camp a huge bone. The surgeon of the expedition examined it and said it certainly must be an enormous femur or thigh bone. The In-

dians agreed with this theory, but claimed it had belonged to one of the giants which inhabited the earth many generations back. One of the medicine-men present thus explained the prodigious size of this apparently human bone. "A long time ago," said he, "the great earth was peopled by warriors of gigantic stature. These



CURLEY, CUSTER'S SCOUT (CROW).

Only Survivor of the Custer Massacre, June 25, 1876.

Indians were huge enough to walk beside the buffalo and lift them up and carry them under their arms as a man would a pet dog. These warriors became so powerful that at last they dared to defy the Great Spirit! This angered the Creator and He ordered the

rain to come. It poured so continuously that all the rivers overflowed their banks, and the prairies became submerged. The Indians in terror fled to the hills and then the waters rose upon them there. At last they climbed the highest peaks of the Rockies, but go where they would the Great Father's vengeance followed them and engulfed them all. Then the earth became silent, and when the last of the waters had receded and all was dry and fair again,



AN AMERICAN INDIAN IGNITING WOOD BY MEANS OF A FIRE-DRILL.

the Mighty Creator sent a new race, the size of men we now see, not over six and a half feet tall. These people would not defy the Great Spirit, but taught their children to call Him Great Father and to worship Him for His goodness and implore His help and protection and His blessing. The Great Father knows the hearts and minds of His children and those who love Him He blesses.”

The Indian medicine-man never teaches disrespect toward or rebellion against the Great Father, neither does he count his art as wonderful in the sight of the Creator of all men and all things.

The religion of the Indians promises nothing for the next world, having no reference to it, but helps to prolong life here. The Christian religion is considered greatly inferior, as its promises are for the future life.

The ceremony of the Grand Medicine is an elaborate ritual, covering several days, the endless number of gods and spirits being called upon to minister to the sick man and to lengthen his life. The several degrees of the Grand Medicine teach the use of incantations, of medicines and poisons, and the requirements necessary to constitute a Brave. "When a young man seeks admission to the Grand Medicine Lodge, he first fasts until he sees in his dream some animal (the mink, beaver, otter, and fisher being most common) which he hunts and kills. The skin is then ornamented with beads or porcupine quills, and the spirit of the animal becomes the friend and companion of the man." The medicine-men have only a limited knowledge of herbs, but they are expert in dressing wounds, and the art of extracting barbed arrows from the flesh can be learned from them.

"After going through with certain incantations, the Grand-Medicine-man tells his patient that his pain is caused by a bear or some other animal, which is gnawing at the vitals. He makes a most infernal noise in order to drive the spirit away, and if the patient recovers, he accredits it to his own skill; if death follows, he falls back upon the plea so often used by his white brother, 'I was called too late!' They make great gain out of the people and are their counsellors in peace and war. They are bitter opponents of Christianity. The venerable medicine-man Shadayence was the most cunning antagonist I ever had among the Indians."¹

In olden times,—yes, to within the memory of living Ojibways,—the medicine-man at the funeral ceremony thus addressed the departed: "Dear friend, you will not feel lonely while pursuing your journey towards the setting sun. I have killed for you a Sioux (hated enemy of the Ojibways), and I have scalped him. He will accompany you and provide for you, hunting your food as you need it. The scalp I have taken, use it for your moccasins."

And yet in spite of these apparently heathenish rites, the Indian is never an atheist; always bending humbly in recognition of

¹From Bishop Whipple's Autobiography, *Lights and Shadows of a Long Episcopate*.

the Great Spirit, the Heavenly Father, the Creator of all things and all men, "Geechee Manito," Great Spirit, whom we in English call the Almighty God.

The Muskee-kee win-ni-nee or medicine-man is quite a different individual from the priest or prophet or magician. The Indian doctor is very skilful in curing simple ailments. Their remedies are cathartics, sweating medicines, expectorants or cough and lung remedies; diuretics, remedies acting on the kidneys, emetics to produce vomiting; remedies for inflammation of mucous surfaces, bladder, etc.; alteratives to eradicate diseases, bitter herbs for tonics, and soporifics, narcotics, etc. to induce sleep; ointments, emulsions, lotions, teas, etc. When we consider the Indian remedies, it makes quite a pharmacopœia and dispensatory. Then the Indians possess very strict rules concerning the management of women in their natural ailments, and unlike the Africans, our Redmen, native Americans, are a clean, orderly people and worthy of respect. In matters relating to hydrotherapy they excel. No one can give better sweatings.

Down by one of the sweat lodges a woman is kindling fires and heating the stones in the centre of the lodge and outside. She covers the frame with robes or skins so as to keep the heat in. A bucket of water stands near the fire. Soon half a dozen young men come to the place and following them the medicine-man. The young men drop their blankets and crawl into the sweat lodge; they are naked as they creep beneath the coverings. The medicine-man starts his "Hoyhey, Hoyhey, Hoyhey,"¹ and sings his sacred songs. The woman passes a vessel into the sweat house; the water hisses as it falls on the hot stones, and steam creeps forth from the crevices in the coverings. At length after a longer or shorter exposure to the steam heat, the men creep out, rise, and all wet with perspiration rush down to the stream and plunge into the cold water. This is the famous Indian sweat bath, cleansing, invigorating, almost stimulating. The patient feels refreshed and like a new man. It is primitive, but it is effective.

¹ The word "hoyhey" is hard to spell in English, perhaps "hoy-ee" would be more explanatory. In the matter of cathartics the Indians outdo their pale-face friends in the abuse and excess of these remedies. They require *large* doses and as every treatment is preceded by purgings some attribute their mortality from consumption to be due to this over-dosing. It is more likely, however, that the change from well-ventilated teepees to close cabins, and from open wood fires to overheated iron stoves, and from venison, prairie chicken, and ground corn cooked in open fireplaces, to the doughy flour bread baked in stoves, that this is due. The borders of the lakes where camps and cabins have long been established become foul and unhealthy, and the pure water they have been used to has failed. Change of habits and the infrequency of the healthful exercise of the hunt, also act against their once rugged constitutions.

And last but not least, these medicine-men are skilled in counter-irritation for the treatment and cure of various disorders.



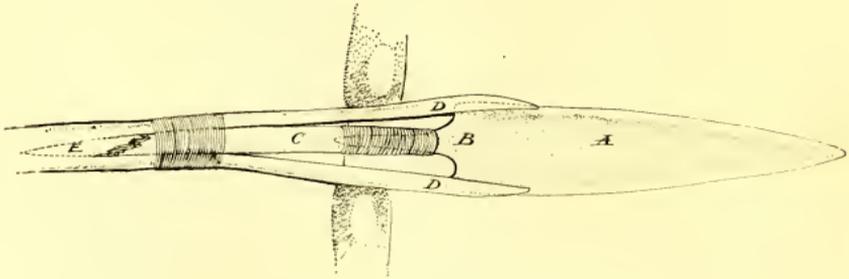
CROW INDIAN MEDICINE-MAN'S SWEAT TEEPEE.
Here the Indian "Turkish" bath is administered with heated stones.

As surgeons they excel in skilful bandaging, splints, and other treatment of fractures; in deformities; in the treatment of snake, dog, wolf, and other bites. They are adepts in extracting arrows

and bullets. Bishop Whipple once narrated to me how the Indians remove an arrow-head. They take a willow stick, cut it exactly in half by dexterously splitting it, remove the pith and smoothing the ends insert one above the superior flange of the arrow, the other beneath, then bind the two together close to the wound and cautiously remove *all*.

The Indian ambulance or *travois* is a remarkable conveyance for carrying the wounded out of reach of the battle, or for transporting him over long marches to his home camp. The comfort of this mode of conveyance is greater than would appear at first sight. It is from witnessing this primitive method among our Indians that American army surgeons have in frontier wars adopted this system and called it the *travois*.

Where can you find among primitive peoples greater natural intelligence in all that pertains to every-day life? In the manufacture of clothing, of teepees or lodges, of arms, or ornaments fit for

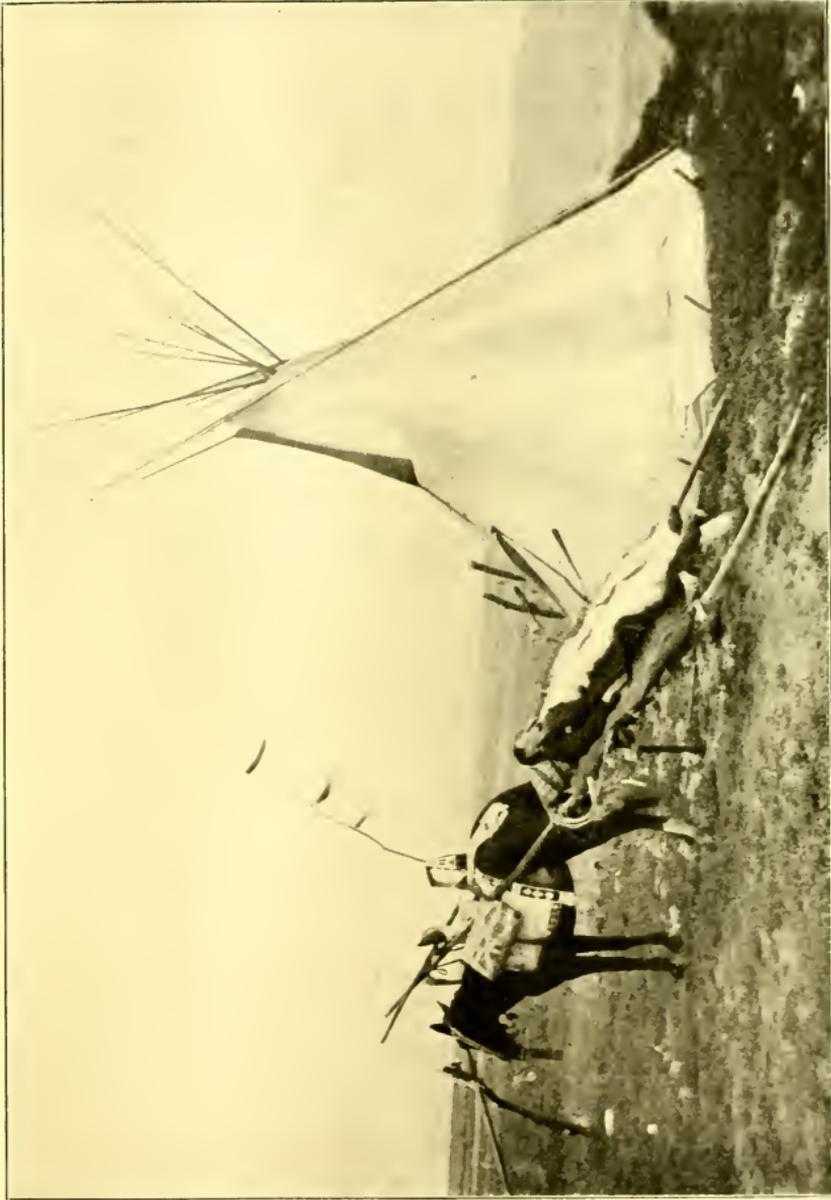


THE EXTRACTION OF AN ARROW-HEAD.

A, Arrow-head; *B*, Shaft of arrow bound upon flange of arrow-head with gut; *C*, Shaft of arrow; *D*, Superior portion of wood; *D*, Inferior portion of wood; midway between *E* and *C*, gut string binding the two pieces tightly together before traction is made to withdraw.

a prince to wear? In point of fact, the clothing of a well-to-do Indian squaw, of which the dress of the wife of the Ute chief Uray would be an excellent example, is often quite valuable, ranging anywhere from fifty to one hundred and fifty dollars. The bead ornaments are skilfully and beautifully made, handsome specimens readily bringing in our eastern stores from ten to seventy-five dollars. The decorated otter and mountain-lion skins and the well-known buffalo hides are highly prized. The skins used for the teepees or lodges are most carefully tanned and prepared by squaws. Moccasins, pouches, rifle-cases, knife-scabbards, and quirts, are well made and command high prices. All these beautiful things, together with pipes, silver ornaments, precious stones, and ores, nug-

gets of gold, are freely given to the medicine-man for his professional fees, or as a reward from "grateful patients" for some



CROW INDIAN TRAVOIS.

The primitive ambulance, a pattern which has often been used by white soldiers in Indian campaigns.

extraordinary success in "cure." The ordinary fee for the Muskee-kee win-ni-nee is in yards of calico, so many for each consultation.

The grand-medicine-lodge is usually an unroofed structure,

quite different from the medicine teepee illustrated in this paper. An excellent picture of the open structure appeared about a year ago in *The Open Court*, in the article on "The Cross Among the North American Indians" (Vol. XIII., p. 302).

The honor of grand-medicine is now and then conferred upon 'pale-faces,' and the writer received this recognition from the Ojibways at White Earth Reservation, in 1879. The initiation reminds one who is a mason of the ceremonies in one of the blue-lodge degrees, and certain mysterious signs have strangely enough led masons to believe that our North American Indians are not wholly unacquainted with ancient rites *closely* resembling the masonry of early times.

Among people so intelligent and so competent it follows that much would be expected of the medicine-man, occupying as he does a position of dignity and influence and oftentimes of wealth. We cannot study our aborigines in a spirit of fairness without discovering among them characters which in old Biblical times were regarded as "wise-hearted" men. The Indian in peace or in war is the true son of nature, a believer in God, a loving father, a devoted, enduring friend, and a consistent enemy; in other words, he is a true *man*.