

## NOTES ON CUSTOMS OF THE DAKOTAHS.

By PAUL BECKWITH.

The Dakotahs or Sioux now scattered over the great Northwest are divided into seven bands and many sub-bands, as follows: .

(1) Sis si-ton-wans, or Village of the Marsh. The major portion of this band are now at Devil's Lake Agency, Dak. The I san-ties, a sub-band who take their name from a former residence at I-san-tine-di, or Knife Lake.

(2) Wah-pe-ku-tes, or Leaf Shooters, a wandering band scattered over the prairies of the Northwest.

(3) Wah-pe-ton-wans, or Village of the Leaves, from their homes in the woods.

(4) I-hank-ton-wans, End Village of the Lake.

(5) I-hank-ton-wan-na. This band and the preceding, having united, are now known by the name of Yank-tons, and are found on the prairies and agencies of the Northwest. The sub-bands of this confederation are Pa-bak-sa, or Cut Heads; Wa-zi-ku-tes, or Pine Shooters; Ki-guk-sa, or Breakers of Law; and the Hunk-pa-di-dan. From the Wazikut's branch of this band the As-sin-na-boines are said to have sprung.

(6) Te-ton-wans, or Prairie Village, number over one-half of the entire Sioux nation, and comprise those bands most opposed to cultivating the soil. General Custer was defeated and annihilated by this band. The sub-bands are as follows: Si-cau-gu, or Burnt Thighs; I-ta-zi-pa, or Bow Pith; Si-ha-sa-pa, or Black Feet; Min-ni-kau-ye-wo-zu-pi, or They who plant by the water; O-o-he-non-pa, or Two Boilings; O-gla-la, and Hunk-pa-pa.

(7) Mdi-wa-kan-ton-wans, or Village of the Spirit Lake, from a former residence at Mille Lacs.

Da-ko-tah is to say the leagued or the allied, and they speak of themselves as the O-ce-ti Sa-ko-wi, or Seven Council Fires.

### DANCES OF THE DAKOTAHS.

Wi-cas-ta-wa-kan, holy or medicine man, the high-priest in the religious ceremonies of the Dakotahs, invariably a chief, who through these dances or religious ceremonies retains his influence in the tribe, understands thoroughly the medicinal properties of the various herbs used by them, and often performs cures acknowledged by Army surgeons as remarkable. An Indian staggering into camp many hours

after being bit by a venomous snake, his leg swollen horribly, was cured in a short time; the late Dr. De Wolf (U. S. Army surgeon killed in the Custer massacre) and the writer saw the man. The doctor said there was no cure for him, yet he was cured by a medicine man. Another cure, a cataract of the eye, was effected by the insertion within the lids of brass filings. To impress upon the mind of the patient the divine nature of his medicine the medicine man adds to the efficacy of his remedies, mysterious incantations, contortions of feature and body, accompanied always by the drum, often placing upon the ground a paper or bark figure, and while the friends are holding the patient over it, shoots it with his gun. As the patient is held over the figure the sickness falls to the ground, enters the figure, and as he kills it with his incantations and his gun, it will not re-enter the patient. All this power is received, they say, through the Great Spirit, who confers upon them a spiritual medicine so powerful that they can kill at will, resuscitate the dead, and cure the sick. The spiritual medicine is represented by a bunch of feathers, a claw, a bird or animal head, a pebble; anything, in fact, that strikes their fancy. To keep their medicine from the gaze of the profane a medicine-bag is prepared from the skin of birds or small animals, decorated with beads and porcupine quills, and in this bag the medicine is placed, and is carried with them always, as long as they are followers of the Wau-kan Wa-ci-pi, holy or medicine dance, and as its name implies, the religion or worship of the medicine of the Dakotahs, their manner of worshiping the multiplicity of gods through their medicine. A council is held by the head-men of the order, who appoint to act as soldiers ten members of the order, who, selecting a suitable spot, erect a 3-foot barricade, in form an ellipse, at each end a tent, one for the high-priests to hold their councils, and in which to keep their Pa-zu-hi-ta-wau-kan, the other for the soldiers, who preserve order, wait upon the dancers, prevent spectators from leaning upon the barricade, and attend to a large cauldron of meat and wild turnips cooking over a fire immediately in front of their tent, often replenished during the ceremonies.

The high-priests entering the circle from their tent, and the soldiers taking their places, the members are admitted by families or groups, who, standing in line, face the east, or medicine tent, in unison throw up their hands and shout, "Brothers, have mercy upon me." The head of the family or spokesman relates where and when each one was initiated into the order, chanting a refrain to the high-priest and holding the medicine-bags in the left hand, tightly pressed against the heart, the right arm raised as if in the act of affirming, trots around the circle crying, "Friend and brother, have mercy upon me;" when reaching the starting place he chants again, this time in praise of the Wau-kan Tan-ta, or Great Spirit, and takes a seat upon the ground, leaning against the barricade. All the members as they enter go through with the same programme.

The high-priest, taking his seat in the medicine tent, appoints four assistants; to one is given a small drum, to the next a pillow and stick, to the third a rattle, and the last assists in grunting. The big drum in the center of the circle, has several drummers, who add without cessation, to the din. The high-priest now speaks to them of this, the holy dance, founded centuries ago, relating how powerful was the medicine of their ancestors, and advising unbelievers not to scoff at them or their medicine, as they have the power to thrust a claw or a stone through the body of any one at will, causing instant death. To show them how strong his medicine is, he calls up one of his assistants, and pointing his medicine-bag at him, gives a puff with his lips, whereupon the assistant falls apparently senseless upon the ground. The high-priest prays the Great Spirit to aid him, bowing to the north, south, east, and west, asks the assistance of the members in bringing their dead brother to life. All the instruments are pounded, accompanied by frantic gesticulations and sonorous grunts, the lifeless man gradually returning to consciousness, and spitting into his hand a mass of froth and blood, in which is a claw or a stone. The high-priest now dances around the circle, showing his medicine-bag, and imitating the animal from which it is taken. Advancing rapidly towards one of the members, he holds his medicine-bag to his mouth and blows over it towards the one selected, who, giving a yell, falls to the ground. The chief continues, and the "dead men" reviving, assist in shooting others, until the ring is full of howling savages, dancing, yelling, and shooting each other. A signal is given, all congregate around the big drum, raising one foot, then the other, alternately, keeping time with a lateral swing of the body, the men chanting in a sepulchral tone, seeming to die out in the pit of their stomachs, and the women on the outside of the group, raising themselves on the ball of their feet, imitate the peculiar call of the female swan. The hoarse guttural sounds of the men, and the clear swan-like notes of the women, the two blending together, were very musical. During the ceremonies the assistants of the high-priest, in performing their office and upon their instruments, trot around the ring faster and faster, grunting at each step, form into line in front of those selected, advance and retreat several times, then rushing forward, thrust their instruments into the hands of their successors, take the seats just vacated, and now represent the gods of the north, south, east, and the west, the high-priest representing the Wau-kan Tan-ka or Great Spirit. When a candidate is initiated he is first taken into the council-tent for instructions, which are secret, stripped of his clothing, excepting an apron or cloth and moccasins, painted black from head to foot, a red spot about the size of a nickel painted between his shoulders. The candidate is exhorted to remain good, and his medicine will be strong, and that he must give a feast once a year; if not, he will be unfortunate, and meet with sickness and death; if good, the Great Spirit will make his heart strong. The candidate now receives the holy claw or stone; the high-priest approaching from the east with

his medicine-bag describes the course of the sun, bowing to the four quarters, says to the candidate, "Now prepare yourself, I am going to transfer to you what I have in my medicine-bag," and thrusting his bag forward the candidate, says, "There goes the spirit." At these words the candidate, kneeling on a blanket, falls upon the ground. All those that wish now come forward and, as offerings, throw over the prostrate figure robes, blankets, skins, and ornaments. By the power of the high-priest the candidate recovers, as described before, is presented with a medicine-bag, and is a recognized member of the order. He must attend the three following meetings in the same costume, painted black; after which he appears as he may wish. Women are members of this order. Dead Indians, men and women, are initiated into this order, through the same performance over a lock of hair of the deceased, wrapped in skin or cloth, laid upon the ground, with robes, blankets, etc., piled as an offering upon it, and afterwards distributed among the members. They say the spirit by this initiation is set on the right road, straight to his or her destination. After the ceremonies the soldiers distribute the food, and the feast commences, constituting the principal attraction to the multitude. The dance, commencing at daylight, lasts until daylight the following morning, and as these dances are given, even in mid-winter, many degrees below zero, one can readily imagine the agony the candidates must undergo, clothed only in a coat of paint. It is generally supposed that the members of the order have secrets and signs, but the penalty is so sure and swift that no exposures have ever been made. Well-known instances have occurred, where indiscretion of members have been punished by their mysterious disappearance, attributed to the medicine men.

*Pa-gi-mi-hi-na-ka-Wa-ci-pi.*—The circling crow dance, also called the straw or grass dance, is controlled by three men, the most influential of the tribe, who wear a peculiar insignia, a tunic of crow and eagle feathers attached to a belt ornamented with beads and quills; over the small of the back project two sticks several inches long; at the ends are jingling bells, every motion of the wearer causing the sticks to vibrate and the bells to jingle. These tunics are held sacred, and no profane hand allowed to touch them. The next officers of the order are the four drummers, each provided with a baton of office, a stick wrapped with porcupine quills and strings of beads, the four sticks being used to suspend the drum, and a large wash-tub or cheese-box, covered with skin, the sides draped with fine cloth, ornamented with feathers, beads, and quills. The duties of the drummers are to strike the drum with full force and to keep up an incessant singing. Stewards are appointed to collect provisions, which are rarely refused. When sufficient is collected to last several days the three leading men are notified, who, calling the lodge, make arrangements for the dance. The crier then goes through the camp announcing when and where the dance will be held.

The three chiefs appear in their feathered tunics and the members

in their most brilliant paint. Seating themselves upon the ground, wrapped in their blankets up to the eyes, the drummers open the ball, the dancers throw their blankets aside, and springing to their feet brandish their tomahawks or knives with violent gestures and an occasional whoop, chant and dance for a few moments, resume their blankets and their seats, leaving one in the ring, who, fiercely gesturing, and wildly waving tomahawk or knife, will brag unmercifully over some exploit in war or chase; again all jump up, dance, and yell. A repetition of the same performances is gone through with again and again for several days or until the provisions are consumed. They will imitate animals, taking raw meat or a fish, snarl, growl, and snap over it, tearing it with their teeth like the wild beast they are so well imitating. All questions are first discussed by the head-men in council, pro and con, and are then put to vote, the votes in the affirmative represented by a stone, those in the negative by a piece of wood. No decision is arrived at until after many pow-wows; even then another lodge will be called in to participate. A question of importance once decided, the head chief of the band will be called in, whether a member of the lodge or not, and he must perform the mission they have intrusted him with, and as their influence is largely kept up through these orders the chiefs are glad of these commissions. There are no signs or pass-words, and with the exception of the skunk-skin garter, elaborately ornamented with beads, there is nothing to designate the members from the outside world. Though this order is of late date it is the most powerful among the Indians. During this dance, if a member wishes a divorce from one or more of his wives (they generally add one or two just before the dance for this purpose), he proclaims that he (naming himself) throws away (naming her), and she is no longer his wife. An outsider, by payment, can deputize a member to act for him. No member will act as spokesman for any one not a member unless paid a retainer's fee, generally a gun or a horse; the more influential gain fifty to one hundred horses during the year, but have to give away as many to retain their influence.

There are no ceremonies of initiation; they generally give a horse, starting him off with a cut of the whip, for any one who chooses to catch him. The order is a charitable one. An old woman called on the order, stated her poverty; immediately the crier was sent around the camp, and in a few hours the members were all present, as they will drop any work or pleasure when called. The leader stated the cause of the meeting; the result was flour and pork, thirteen blankets, calico, fine cloth, and skins. Another instance: An Indian, wishing to build a house, invited the order to a feast; as he was not a member, one stated his wants. After the feast the building was soon completed. Though a charitable and social society, it is one very much feared; and there exist lodges among all the different tribes and bands throughout the great Northwest.

*Hi-wau-gag Wa-ci-pi.*—*The sun dance.*—The Sioux are superstitious, and firm believers in dreams, signs, and omens. This dance is given to avoid sickness or any misfortune that may have been foretold by a dream, sign, or omen, it is a self-inflicted punishment the Indian undergoes to propitiate the Great Spirit.

A circle is formed of green branches stuck into the ground; in the center, forming a triangle, are planted three poles or saplings, one much longer than the other two, the trunks cleared of branches excepting a tuft at the tops, a piece of white calico is fastened on one and a piece of red cloth on the other, both burnt after the dance, as they are then considered sacred. To each of the poles is fastened a stout thong, as high as a man's head from the ground. The dancer takes his place in the center of the triangle, and making incisions through the flesh on shoulders and breast, ties the ends of thongs through the incisions, and places between his lips a small quill whistle through which he breathes, at each respiration giving a shrill whistle. He is clothed only in a shawl tied around his waist falling to his knees, his body painted black, hair loose and hanging upon his shoulders, and with rings of white rabbit-skins tied in his flesh on shoulders and legs. As the sun sinks below the horizon this dance of torture is commenced by a slow sidewise motion of the body, as each foot is raised and lowered, their eyes following the course of the sun as it revolves around the earth, and as it rises above the horizon their eyes are kept fastened upon it. This is kept up until sunset, if the dancer has not succumbed through weakness before this; he tugs and strains in his efforts to pull the thongs through the flesh, and finally falling with his whole weight tears the thongs through, generally rendering himself insensible.

The dance, as its name indicates, is in honor of the sun (typical of the Great Spirit), and the great object is to keep their gaze upon it, the object of their adoration, or cease to follow its course, whether beneath or above them, in whose honor they are suffering these tortures. The drummers and a regular band of singers keep up a chant of "The Great Spirit keep us." In dancing, the arms to the elbows are held pressed to their sides and from elbows straight out to the front, hands clinched, the feet raised alternately from the ground, the body moving from side to side and backward and forward, stretching the gashes to their fullest extent. To see one undergoing this fearful torture called dancing, naked, painted black, hair streaming, blood trickling from their gashes, the shrill whistle at each breath, the hoarse guttural singing, the dull thud of the drum, is a dreadful sight indeed.

*I-wa-hi-ci-pi.*—*The scalp dance.*—This dance follows the bringing home of scalps. A circle is formed, on one side stand the warriors, their bodies painted red, the feathers in their head-dress denoting the number of scalps taken, tomahawks, knives, and guns, in their hands; on the other side stand the young women in their best attire, carrying the scalps stretched on hoops and dangling at the ends of long poles. The

musicians, drummers, and singers, squat upon the ground near by. The men commence the war song, sometimes forming a circle, dance around the women holding the scalps, who join in the refrain, as it were, then again forming in two lines facing each other, all dance forwards and backwards. If the scalps have been captured during the winter the dance is kept up at intervals until the leaves grow in the spring. If taken in the summer, they dance and rejoice over them until the leaves fall off. Painted red four times, then they are buried. Each time the scalps are painted the warriors are expected to give away their blankets and their clothes, as their hearts are strong.

*Ce-ki-ti-pi.*—*The virgins' lodge.*—This feast or ceremony is only participated in by those who are virgins. If reports are circulated in the camp derogatory the girl immediately gets up a "Virgins' Lodge." An old man is selected, who arranges the tipi or lodge, in which the feast is to take place, by smoothing the ground two or three yards in diameter in the center of the lodge. In the middle of the cleared space is placed a round stone, near it a knife is planted, blade up. The crier goes through the camp, specifying where and when the feast will be held. When all are assembled the girl enters, places her hand on the point of the knife blade, typical of the god of war, that he may pierce her through with this sharp blade if she is not pure; then on the stone, typical of the god of the mountains, that he may crush her; then placing her head against the earth, typical of the god of the earth, that he may open the earth and engulf her if she is not truthful; she then takes her seat, her accuser is brought forward and goes through the same ceremony, and then openly accuses her; if his accusation is not substantiated, he is led from the lodge amid the jeers and laughter of the spectators. After the trial the feast commences, and the girl goes forth with unblemished character. This feast excites a beneficial effect morally upon the Indian women, and serves to make an extremely immoral nation very circumspect in their actions.

The Dakotas have several ceremonies of adulation or praise.

*A-do-wan*, to sing in praise of the Great Spirit, as the Dakotas do before going into battle, or upon a raid into the enemy's country, that he may render the hearts of the enemy weak, so they may be killed and their scalps captured without danger to themselves.

*Wi-cas-ta a-do-wan.*—(To sing the praises of a man.)—The singer, taking the heads of several woodpeckers, goes to the lodge or tipi of some particular individual, will sing over these heads in his praise, reciting his deeds in war and at the council fire, or exploits of the chase, receiving in return a valuable present.

*A-do-wan.*—*The pipe or praise dance.*—Two persons, the singer and dancer, go to a mourning lodge, and taking the bundle of cloth in which the hair or the medicine of the deceased is kept, hang it on four sticks driven into the ground. The singer then takes the pipe, the stem elaborately decorated with feathers, beads, and quills, invites the spec-

tators to join with him in his song of praise to the spirit of the departed, slowly waving the pipe over the bundle extols the virtues of the deceased. As the mourners are generally very liberal in their presents, the singers make a profitable business at these a-do-wans. The pipe-stem is a peculiar one; a flat stem worked with porcupine quills and beads, in the middle an eagle tail spread so each feather stands out by itself, and attached to the center of each feather are small bundles of horse-hair, wrapped with ribbons and quills. Those who have seen the dance describe it as being very graceful and beautiful.

*Yum-ni-wa-ci pi*—*The circle dance*.—A social gathering where those of both sexes meet and dance around a pole planted in the ground.

*Han-wa-ci-pi*—*Night dance*.—Many gather together, men and women, with drums and singers, by moonlight, to dance and sing. Forming two lines quite a distance apart, the men take up the refrain for a few words; then the women answer. As a rule the Indians are too superstitious to leave their tipis after dark, so this dance is but rarely indulged in. The Dakotah can hardly be said to know anything about poetry, as the ho-ho-ho, ugh-ugh-ugh, or hi-hi-hi of their songs is only now and then interrupted by the enunciation of words. Their language is so figurative that the meaning is generally the opposite to what the expressions used would naturally convey.

#### ORNAMENTS.

There are but few now in use with any meaning. The number of eagle feathers worn denote the number of enemies killed, the wing feathers of the bald-headed eagle denoting male, and the black-eagle feathers denoting women. If they scalped the enemy, a broad red streak is painted across the feather; if shot, a round red spot is painted upon it; if the person killed was of prominence or reputation, the feathers are dyed red. The above is also applied to the killing of a grizzly bear. Small sticks arrayed with porcupine quills are sometimes attached to the quill of the feather, and small pieces of white fur glued to the ends. No one will wear an eagle feather unless entitled to it, as they believe it will fly away from their heads if worn unlawfully.

Many of the so-called civilized Indians still retain the custom of arranging the scalp-lock. The scalp-lock proper is a perfectly round circle on the center of the head where the hair grows to a point. Around this lock they tie very firmly a bead band an inch wide; the hair is then braided, an otter skin twisted around it spirally, forming a braid 2 and even 4 feet long; this is kept oiled and nice for the enemy to capture if they get a chance; the part is dyed vermilion. If an Indian has the time and the person killed is of importance, they will take the entire scalp, including the eyebrows and ears. The scalps are stretched on hoops and dried; sometimes a picture will be painted upon the skin representing the history of its capture. The Indians have many ornaments; none, however, are of any particular significance. It is not to

be believed that the grizzly-bear claws worn as a necklace are marks of distinction; but as they are costly it is merely a matter of wealth and not a symbol of chieftainship. In former days it may have been so used, but not within the recollection of those now living.

#### RELIGION.

The Dakotahs have many gods; their visible and invisible world is peopled with spiritual beings, inhabiting everything in nature; consequently almost everything is an object of worship. He renders homage to the sun and moon, sacrificing as often to the bad as to the great or good spirit. His gods are of air, water, and of the prairies; their religious ceremonies consist of dances. The god of the waters, Un-kte-hi, a fabled monster of the deep, probably a whale, the tradition handed down from their ancestors who may have lived near the great waters. Wa-zi-ya, the ice god, or god of winter, he who approaches the haunts of men in winter and returns to the land of ice in summer. Can-o-te-dan, or forest god, as it is said to resemble a man; it may have been a monkey. He-yo ka, god of the prairies, whose home is supposed to be in the little hills upon the prairies. He wraps his ermine robes around him in summer and goes naked in winter. Wa-kin-yan, the god of thunder, a fabled giant who rides upon the clouds, whose thundering voice they hear. He causes the lightning flashes by rubbing two sticks together.

#### MORTUARY CUSTOMS.

Upon the decease of a member of a family the survivors allow their friends, relatives, and the medicine men to take away the best they have of everything. Their hair is allowed to grow unkempt; they besmear their faces and bodies with earth, and wear old and ragged clothes; the women gash themselves with knives. The body is draped in the best of everything—robes, blankets, and fine cloth—and placed upon a scaffold, until, in the course of time, the bones fall to the ground; they are then taken and buried. The mourning is kept up one year, amidst dirt and ragged garments; then they wash themselves, put on clean clothes, and never mention the name or allude to the dead person, and it is considered a deadly insult that the name of the departed should be mentioned in their presence. Immediately after a death they leave their homes and can not be induced to return to them. They have been known to leave the corpse in the house for months, erecting a tent near by. In either case when the corpse is removed a new opening is made, through which it is carried. Gray Thunder, a noted Dakotah chief, died in 1874—a man said to have been over 7 feet in height. The army surgeon then stationed at Fort Totten, Dak., offered the widow quite a large sum of money for the corpse, in order to articulate the skeleton. The offer was refused. The widow had a stout box made at the agency, and every year up to 1877, in her migratory visits to the Mission River

Agency, loaded the remains upon a *sung-wa-kin-i-hu-pa* and carried it there and back twice a year, a distance of over 100 miles, for fear the skeleton should fall into the hands of the white doctor.

#### SUNG-WA-KIN-I-HU-PA.

The apparatus for packing on a horse or dog. It is made by placing the ends of two long tent poles together at an angle of about 40 degrees, the ends fastened together and placed on the back of horse or dog, the other dragging upon the ground; behind the horse's tail cross-pieces are tied, on which loads are packed. The Sissitonwans and the Ithanktonwans of the prairies train large dogs for the purpose.

#### I-GUS-KA (UNTYING THE BUNDLE).

This is a Dakota custom. A bundle of tobacco is sent to seal the bond of friendship between bands or villages; if it is untied, blankets, guns, kettles, and articles of finery are sent in return. If they have nothing to give or refuse to accept the overtures of peace the bundle is returned untied.

#### I-ZU-YA-PI.

Carried by the Dakotahs when going to war, as the palladium of the Romans. Sometimes it is a pipe, sometimes the skin of an animal.

#### DAKOTAH MENU.

Pemmican, the flesh of ox, buffalo, deer, or other wild meat, cut in long thin strips, and dried in the sun, "jerked;" as soon as cured it is beaten by the squaws with stones until in shreds, collected and placed in skin bags; then bones are pounded and the marrow extracted, melted, and poured into the bags with the shredded meat, to which has been added quantities of *hau-tas-ka*, a small red berry, very aromatic and indigenous to the prairies. Pemmican is used on long marches or journeys, as it is compact, and a small quantity serves for many meals. There are many wealthy white people of Minnesota who are regularly supplied with pemmican for home consumption, as when properly made it is not unlike *pâte de foie gras*. Accompanied by a dish of wild rice from the rice lakes of Minnesota, it is a repast so toothsome that even those without an appetite can enjoy. Throughout Minnesota are many shallow lakes, from which quantities of wild rice are gathered by the Indians, until it has become a business with many of them; it is in fact superior to cultivated rice. *Tip-sin-na*, wild turnip, is nature's most precious gift to the Indians, who in the fall of the year desert their villages and roam the prairies turnip hunting; it is no unusual sight to see the hillsides of the rolling prairies dotted with men, women, and children, each with a long heavy pole, sharpened at one end, digging turnips. They are agreeable in taste, raw or dried; the Dakotahs dry them for win-

ter's use. It is a bulbous root, growing deep in the ground, and very nutritious; raw and dried it forms the principal item in the Dakota menu. Some years ago experiments were made by French savants, and it was found that a nutritious substitute for wheat flour could be made from the dried turnips. The following bulbous esculent roots are also eaten: *a-sin-na*, growing in the marshes, about the size of a walnut; *pun-cin-na*, about the size of hens' eggs, grows on the margins of lakes and rivers; *ni-do*, in taste resembles a sweet potato; *hu-ba*, a large water grass, the stalks of which are eaten; *ou-mui-ca*, beans growing wild in the valleys and low lands, having a vine-like top the pod growing at the roots being dug up in spring and fall of the year; wild hop-vine, as it sprouts from the ground, the fac-simile of the asparagus, but superior in delicacy and flavor, and it is no uncommon sight on the frontier to see officers of the Army (who are generally epicurean in their tastes) digging wild hop sprouts for their own table; *ta-to* (Anglice evidently), a root with a long branching stalk, dried for winter use; *ce-he-ca*, a small root the size of a hazel-nut, collected by the ground-squirrels and prairie-mice, and deposited in large quantities in their subterranean homes. In the fall the Dakotahs collect from these supplies for their winter's use. The taste is rather agreeable, resembling somewhat that of a green pea. *Shun-ka*, or dog, last but not least of the edibles that please the savage palate, can not be called a domestic dish; it is not eaten, except in cases of dire necessity, as it is considered too delicate for ordinary consumption; but is usually eaten at a special feast in honor of warriors of renown, to whom, as the highest mark of courtesy, the head is given. All the birds of the air, excepting the eagle and the turkey, are eaten by the Dakotahs, and all the beasts of the earth, and all the denizens of the water. Capable of containing quantities that would surfeit several white men, the Dakota will in days of scarcity tighten his belt in order to prevent a vacuum, and go on his way uncomplaining.

#### MARRIAGE CEREMONIES.

As soon as the young couple have concluded to cast their lot in common and are engaged, the young man calls his brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, and cousins together, and tells them that it is his desire to take such and such a one for his wife. After eating the repast spread before them they separate for their respective lodges. The following day as many as wish return, each bringing some object as a present—a gun, horse, blanket, anything they may have, and of the best (a bridle represents a horse, and is redeemed on demand). All these things they make into a bundle, carried by the mother of the young man upon her back, who lays it in front of the lodge of the expectant bride and returns home. Now, the girl's mother or other member of her family brings the bundle into the lodge and prepares a feast, inviting all the relatives of the young girl, who, after participating in the good things spread

out before them, and learning the particulars of the case, discuss the character of the young brave, after coming to a conclusion in favor of or against the approaching nuptials. If favorable they return next day with their bundle of presents. Then the bundle of the bridegroom elect is opened and the articles are distributed among the bride's family. They, in their turn, take the bundle brought by them, give it to the girl's mother, who takes it upon her back and the girl by the hand and deposits both at the door of the expectant husband. The groom's mother comes out, takes the girl and bundle into the lodge, where all the family are congregated, seated around the fire, leaving the place of honor (opposite the entrance) vacant. In the center of this space is a dish with two spoons in it. The young man and girl sit one on each side, eat a few spoonfuls from the dish, and then pass the dish around. The bride's bundle is then opened and distributed among those present. This constitutes one form of marriage among the Dakotahs. As will be seen, the parents have no voice in the matter, leaving it entirely to the brothers, etc. In making up the bundles those wishing to give a horse throw in a bridle, marked with their totem. This represents a horse, and is always redeemed. Often an old squaw will be seen trudging along, bent double, with a sack on her back containing guns, swords, pistols, knives, blankets, beads, and articles too numerous to mention, bent on a matrimonial pilgrimage such as described above.

In different sections, even among the same tribe, they have other ceremonies: when they purchase their wives, by tying a horse at her parents' door; if, on returning the following day, they find the horse still there, they will add another, keeping this up until their limit is reached; if the horses are taken away he will then enter the lodge and take his bride home; if it requires more horses than he is willing to give he takes his horses away and tries elsewhere. Often when the relatives of the young girl refuse all overtures of the young man he will, through a friend, entice the young girl into the woods, where, joining them, he runs off with her. This is also recognized as a marriage. The Dakotah is a polygamist, having as many as five wives. The marital tie is not very binding, and divorces are not sought after in the courts; but in the straw dance they will "throw away" those wives they no longer wish to retain; in many instances they will take "unto themselves" several wives in order to throw them away at this dance, believing it will add to their importance to have so strong a heart. When a young man throws away his wife he becomes a "young man" again and seeks other wives. The woman is soon married again. The courting is always done in the evening and in the lodge. If the attentions of the young man are disagreeable to the young woman, she will get up and blow up the fire. The young man takes the hint and retires. If, on the contrary, she should be willing, she lets the fire alone.

A husband will never speak to his wife's mother or father, and if it should be an absolute necessity it is done through a third person. the

same with the bride, and though all may be living in the same lodge they never speak except in cases of absolute necessity, and then only through a third party. When the husband meets his wives' parents in the woods he turns his head aside and passes by without noticing them.

When a child is sick the father will take the child's name, believing it will cause others of the family to die if the name should die. The grandparents as a rule take care of the children and are called father and mother. Uncles and aunts are always addressed as father and mother.

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