

THE APACHE MEDICINE CEREMONIES PERFORMED OVER THE
DAUGHTER OF C 30.

ALBERT B. REAGAN.

C 30's daughter, near Fort Apache, Arizona, was very sick, so the chief medicine men of the clan, having used every other remedy known to their profession, decided to use the Gunelpieya Disk performances (described in the Indiana Academy of Science for 1903) and the Medicine Ghost Dance as a remedy to make her well. This remedy is the last medical resort known to the Apache Indians. They believe that it will either cure the patient or, if he dies, will prepare him for the Happy Hunting Ground. It belongs to the faith cure side of the Apache medical practice. The Gunelpieya Disk performances are day-time ceremonies, the Medicine Ghost Dance is always performed at night. The former always immediately precedes the latter.

Having decided what to do, the medicine men set about to do it at once.

In a sheltered sunny spot they made a canvas enclosure about thirty feet in diameter. The enclosed area being then leveled, they drew a medicine disk in it some sixteen feet in diameter. This disk they decorated in concentric rings with several symbols of their gods; the sun, rainbows, deer, bird, and gods or Gunelpieya, represented by the figures of men. These they drew on the ground in various colors, the coloring material being prepared as follows: The black from groundup charcoal; the red from pulverized red sandstone; the yellowish-white from crushed limestone; and the green from groundup leaves.

The disk being completed the Gunelpieya ceremonies began. The oldest grandmother present, in this case, Chinda by name, came into the canvas enclosure, walked to the center of the disk with cattail flag pollen, sprinkled each of the symbolic figures of the disk with cattail flag pollen, the sacred meal of the Apaches, called by them "Hottendin." She then took a cup partly filled with water and, beginning with the outer rainbow circle, the outer figure of the disk thus drawn, she walked around on each concentric circle, both space and bow, from the rim of the disk to its center, stooping before each sacred object to gather a pinch of dust

from it. This dust she put in the cup which she carried in her hand. Having completed her dust gathering, she prayed for a moment to the four great gods that are holding up the four corners of the earth; then set the cup down in the center of the disk and took her departure.

As soon as grandma commenced to take her leave, the sick girl entered the enclosure and, as she was too weak to walk, they carried her around each concentric circle from the outer rim of the disk to its center, placing her on the sun drawing with her face turned toward the evening sun. At this moment the musicians, who had seated themselves within the canvas enclosure in the space between the canvas and the disk, began to chant in the minor key:

“Kaws’ ah tun’-nee yah’ osh’ kah’
 Kaws’ ah tun’-nee yah’ osh’ kah’
 Kaws’ ah tun’-nee yah’ osh’ kah’
 Kaws’ ah tun’-nee yah’ osh’ kee’ yah’.
 Yah’ dethith’-be’-zhe’
 Pair-ris’ kee-kay’ ed-dee-teen’
 Tset’ un-tzhon’-nee
 Bair’ in-dah’ klee’-dal-ash’
 Yah’ ed-dee-teen’ oo’ bair’ tzhon’-nee
 Nod’-o-tash’ yo’ e’ hay’ nay’.”

Just as the monotonous music had attracted the attention of all, a ghost dancer, called by the Indians “Cheden,” came from a nearby thicket and danced into the enclosure. He was nude with the exception of dancing skirt, moccasins and hat, the latter being a square-shouldered ghost hat. This hat had for a support piece a bow-shaped withe which passed, yoke fashion, from the crown of the head to beneath the chin, where the ends of the yoke were tied together with a sinew to keep the hat in place. This withe had a muslin mask stretched over it loosely. To this yoke at the top was fastened a transverse-bar of yucca wood from which several upright pieces projected on which there were peculiarly carved cross pieces and zigzag red lines, indicating lightning. To make the ghost figure more grotesque, the dancer’s body was painted in various colors. A ghost god decorated his breast and the red bolt lightning his arms. He held a butcher knife in one hand and a lightning painted wand in the other. On entering he danced around within the enclosure for a considerable time. He then walked around the circle from the east, turning con-

tinually to the right and edging in toward the center of the disk till he reached the patient, approaching her from the rear. He then laid down his knife and wand and dipped his hands in the muddy water in the cup. He then rubbed the sick one’s back with the muddied hands. When he had done this he lifted his hands skyward and sent the “sick” away by



The Medicine Dancer. A Pose in the Medicine Dance.

blowing a hissing breath through them. In like manner he placed his hands on the woman’s head, on her breast and on her arms. Having completed his task and sent “sick” away, he galloped off into obscurity.

When the “Cheden” had gone, chief medicine man Brigham Young went and took the muddy cup and rubbed the woman in the same manner as the “Cheden” had done before him, except that he daubed her almost all over with the mud, praying continually as he did so. When he had completed his daubing, they carried the sick woman from the enclosure.

Then each one who cared took some of the dust of the gods, that is, gathered a pinch of dust from each of the symbolic figures. This being done, the disk was obliterated. The Gunelpieya ceremonies were thus brought to a close. The next scenes were those of the ghost dance.

At about ten o'clock that night a huge bonfire was kindled in a level open area, around which practically all the Indians of the tribe gathered. Two drummers seated themselves on their blankets a little to the west of the big fire and began to beat the Indian "tomtoms," drums made by stretching a rawhide over the open face of a pot. As soon as the dull drum beats were heard all who desired to sing joined the drummers and began to chant:

To'-kwah tzhoo'-nah nahd'-o-tash'

To'-kwah tzhoo'-nah nahd'-o-tash'

To'-kwah tzhoo'-nah nahd'-o-tash'

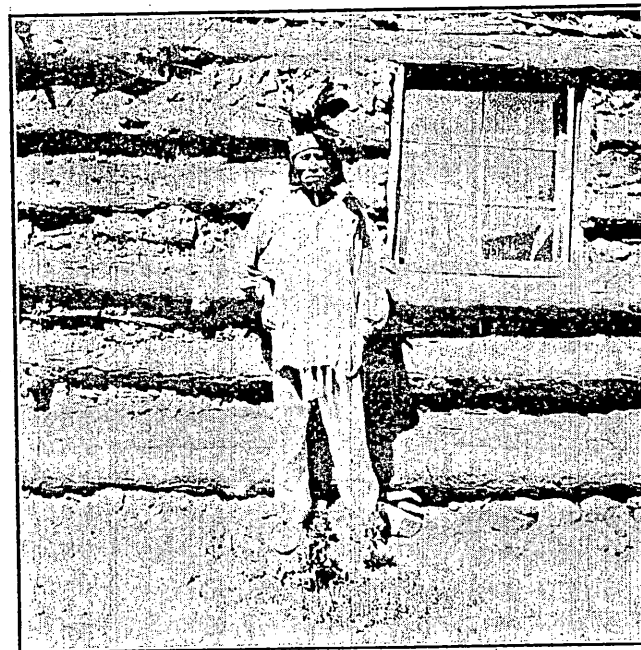
To'-kwah tzhoo'-nah nahd'-o-toosh'-she ah' i' a' nah' ah'

To'-kwah tzhoo'-nah nahd'-o-toosh'-she ah' i' a' nah' i'.

After the singing had been going on for probably half an hour, the sick girl was carried to the place of meeting and placed on a blanket to the east of the fire. On this she reclined for almost an hour waiting for those who were to perform over her. At last they came, the ghost dancers. There were five of them, four medicine dancers and a clown. The former were "Chedens" and were all attired like the "Cheden" above described with the exception that the hats of two of them had the lath crest pieces arranged in fan shape so as to resemble the spread tail of a turkey, which it was intended to represent. The clown was attired, painted and daubed similarly to the ghost dancers, the crest of his hat, however, was neither square shouldered nor fan-shaped; but instead the lath extended out as horns from each side, a small cross cresting the hat. Besides the difference in the hat, he also had a belt of pine twigs around his waist and a bunch of fir twigs at his back that, in several respects, made him look like Christian in "Pilgrims' Progress" as he started out with his load of sins on his back. The ghost dancers carried lightning painted wands in each hand; the clown carried a thunder stick in one hand and a three-pronged stick in the other. The thunder stick was a piece of lath suspended on a string. The string being twisted, the whirling of the lath gave a sound "all the same thunder," to use the Indian expression. The three-pronged stick resembled the trident of the fabled Neptune. The

clown thus attired and equipped looked much like the pictures of Satan, whom he was intended to represent, except that he was wingless.

These medicine actors approached the congregated people from the southwest, encircled them in a great circle, made circle after circle, each time edging in toward the great fire. As they thus approached they kept



Medicine Man. C4.

putting their heads near to the ground as if smelling for something, then gobbling and strutting like a turkey and waving their hands and wands like a flying bird flops its wings.

At last they entered the sick one's presence and acting as though surprised, they danced backwards and forwards for several yards to the music of the chant:

"Kahs'-ah-tun' nee yah' ash kah'

Kahs'-ah-tun' nee yah' ash kah'

Kahs'-ah-tun' nee yah' ash kah'

Kahs'-ah-tun' nee yah' ash kee' yah'."

Then they approached again only to make a retrograde movement as before. This they did several times in succession. Then they approached and strutted around the little spot that the girl occupied, the clown going through every grimace known to his fraternity. After encircling the patient once, they pranced for a moment while "grandma" sprinkled the sacred meal upon them, blowing her breath in blessing on each one as she sprinkled him. This completed scene one of this act and the men of the gods cantered off into the darkness to go through their religious incantations to drive away the evil spirits, "sick."

The ghost dancers returned and formed in column facing the west, the sick one being changed on her blanket so that she faced them. They danced up to her feet and then retrograded in a backward movement to the spot where they had first formed the column, gobbling and strutting and waving their arms in imitation of a flying turkey. This they repeated seven times. Then the foremost dancer, as he made pose after pose often imitating the actions of a mother quail when protecting her brood, left the column and danced to the feet of the dying girl. He reached her presence, strutted around her, laid the crossed wands on her, blew his breath on them, danced backwards for about twelve feet with medicine wands still crossed, parted the wands by a sweeping vigorous movement of the hands in opposite directions, thus sending the evil spirits not into the swine, but to the four winds. He returned to the patient, placed the wands on her breast, then danced backwards and scattered the evil ones as before. He then placed the crossed wands upon her head, and lastly upon her back, each time performing as above described. His work being completed, he galloped off into obscurity to appear in the next scene.

The other medicine dancers in succession went through practically the same performance as the first "Cheden" did. Then the clown came. His performing, in addition to his tumbling and rolling around in the dirt, was about the same as that of those who preceded him, except that he did not strut and gobble like a turkey. His acting completed part one of this scene.

There were three other parts to this scene all of which were similar to the one just described with the exception that the position taken by the actors was different. In part two the sick one faced the southwest, the dancing column the northeast; in part three she faced the northwest, the column the southeast; and in part four she faced the northeast, the

column the southwest. Part four completed this scene and the medicine actors passed out beyond the circle of light.

The next ten scenes were similar to the scene just described, except that when lookers-on went to sleep the Satanic majesty woke them up with his trident and made them dance, there being twenty-seven sleepy ones dancing at one time.

Just as day began to dawn the twelfth and last scene began. The



Chief Brigham Young, of the Apaches.

medicine dancers appeared, were sprinkled with the sacred dust, and began to perform over the sick one as in the previous ten scenes with the exception that they used medicine hoops instead of wands. These hoops were two and one-half feet in diameter, were five in number, were made of willow, and were painted so that the five represented the rainbow in color which they were intended to represent. Besides being painted, each hoop had five eagle feathers suspended from it.

When this scene began the young and middle-aged lookers-on took one more drink of Indian whiskey (they had been drinking it all night), formed around the central fire in a great circle, and danced around from left to right, the women in one half of the circle, the men in the other. The old women danced backward and forward on either side of the fire



Grandma Irrigating.

within the outer dancing circle; and old grandma, Brigham Young, medicine man C 4, and Loco Jim sprinkled the sacred dust and prayed incessantly to the gods. The dancing became more and more vigorous. Every one joined in it. The sound of the peculiar drum, now being beat with greater accent, the loud chanting and the deafening shouts of the dancers filled all the surrounding country with ear-grating sounds. The excitement reached a high tension. The sick one made one supreme effort to rise and join in the dance; but she had not sufficient strength. They lifted her to a standing position, they sprinkled her with the sacred

dust, they rubbed her back with scorched fir twigs, they supported her in a dancing position. She made one more heroic effort to dance and become well. Greater and greater grew the excitement. Loco Jim prayed louder, the shrieks and shouts of the dancers became deafening. The crisis came. In the excitement the sick one forgot her ailments. She danced. She took a medicine god in each hand. She lifted them high above her head. She leaped. She crow-hopped. She posed. She strutted round and round the great fire like a turkey. She called the gods by name. She shrieked, swooned and died.

Words can not describe the scene that followed. Men, yes, Indian men, wept, the women wailed with the hideous coyote yelping wail so characteristic of the Apaches. They all pulled their hair out by handfuls, they rent their apparel and destroyed their property at hand. Then all made a rush to see the corpse. They trampled over each other, and it was with difficulty that they were kept from crowding one another into the great fire. They carried her to the nearest wigwam; stripped, washed and dressed her; beaded her with all the beads of her clan; put wristlets upon wristlets on her wrists; rolled her in her best blanket; took her and her medicine accouterments to the mountain side and buried them beneath a pinyon tree. Then they returned and destroyed everything which belonged to her, both animate and inanimate, together with her father's "tepee," that the things that were hers on earth might be with her in spirit in the land of bliss. Then for thirty days the women wailed and mourned for her at morning, noon and night. Thus were the ceremonies performed over the medicine girl brought to a close.