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THE ATSINA

TRADITIONS AND HISTORY

THE Atsina, commonly designated Gros Ventres of the Prairie, are of the Algonquian stock and a branch of the Arapaho.

Their name for themselves is *Aáninen,* Atsina[1] being their Blackfoot name. Judging by the very vague tradition, their original separation from the Arapaho must have occurred in early times; but care should be taken not to confuse with this primal separation their return to the north from an extended visit to the Arapaho during the last century.

As to the more remote event, practically all that can be learned is that the Atsina believe they once dwelt toward the south, where they left the main tribe on account of a quarrel with the head-chief over the division of a buffalo carcass. This incident is so similar to the Hidatsa-Apsaroke story of their separation that one is inclined to question if the tradition recounting it is not derived from that source. However, many hunting tribes probably quarrelled over the division of game, and it is not unlikely that the Atsina have a legitimate claim to this story. Apparently these people know practically nothing of a northward migration from that place, and their entire traditionary history is very vague.

Running Fisher's account of the subsequent migration from the north is, that in an autumn of long ago a terrible plague came upon the people, destroying more than half their number, and in fear of a revisitation they began a southeastward journey from the far Northwest. All through the winter they drifted, and as spring drew near they came to a large river flowing eastward, which Running Fisher believes to have been the Saskatchewan. The ice, already becoming weak from the spring thaws, was yet strong enough to afford a passage, so the tribe commenced to cross. About a third of the people had passed

[1] The name *Atsina* (At-se'-na) is the Blackfoot (Siksika) term for "Belly People," a meaning borne out by their Shoshoni designation, *Sä'pani,* "Bellies," by the name applied to them in the sign language of the plains, and by that given them by the Canadian French, *Gros Ventres,* a contraction of *Gros Ventres des Prairies,* by which they were distinguished from the Gros Ventres of the Missouri, or Hidatsa. In the days of the early fur-traders the tribe was known as Fall Indians, *Gens des Rapides,* from the fact that when first seen they dwelt at the falls of the Saskatchewan. The Assiniboin name for them is practically identical, i.e, *Hahá-to^{n}wa^{n},* Waterfall Village.

over, a third were on the ice, and the remainder were still on the northern bank. With those in the act of crossing was an old woman leading her grandson, who, seeing a horn protruding through the ice, asked his grandmother to cut it off for him. The woman at first paid no attention, but the boy's plea became so insistent that she turned back and began to chop off the horn. As she cut, blood commenced to flow, and suddenly a great monster heaved the entire length of its body out of the water, crushing the ice and drowning all the people thereon. The portion of the tribe that had successfully crossed continued their journey southeastward until they reached approximately their present locality, while the rest, terrified by the disaster, turned back. While this narration may possibly have some basis in fact, it of course is too vague to serve as a foundation for historical conclusions.

Whether the Atsina reached their historical habitat in northern Montana prior to the arrival of the Blackfeet in that region seems impossible to answer from the point of view of Atsina tradition; they were certainly in the Blackfoot country in the middle of the eighteenth century. In Lewis and Clark's time (1805-06) the Atsina roved between the Missouri and the Askaw, or Bad river, a branch of the Saskatchewan. The narrations of their tribal wars give the best idea of their movements following their arrival in Montana.

The earliest intertribal battle known in their traditions occurred, according to their system of reckoning, four generations ago. At that time, they say, the area now occupied by the Atsina and Blackfeet was Shoshoni country, and this battle was one of invasion into Shoshoni territory. The ground on which they fought was a rocky butte some distance north of the Bearpaw mountains, in Montana, but south of Milk river. The Shoshoni greatly outnumbered the Atsina, who held their own for a time through the great bravery and individual valor of a man named Dirty-eyed Bird; but, notwithstanding his prowess, they were on the verge of defeat when an Atsina, with the first and only gun in possession of the tribe, rushed forward and at close range shot one of the enemy. They, strangers to firearms, looked upon the mysterious killing as due to some spiritual power, and fled in terror. This battle occurred before the Atsina acquired their first horses. We probably are afforded an approximation of the date of this conflict by the fact that the Dakota obtained their first guns during the closing years of the eighteenth century.

The next recorded battle was engaged in a generation later, after the

Atsina had obtained a few horses. This also was against the Shoshoni, and was fought between the Marias river and the site of the later Fort Benton. The Atsina greatly outnumbered the Shoshoni and almost annihilated them. The survivors fled to the south, forever abandoning this region as their home. The name of no chief taking part in this battle can now be recalled.

Next came a battle that occurred at a time when a war-party of Piegan and Atsina led by White Owl, searching for the enemy, found the Sioux camped at the mouth of the Yellowstone. They charged the camp but were driven back, and to protect themselves built a breastwork of logs. Here in the depth of winter they held off the superior Dakota force for ten days, subsisting on their dogs, which they ate raw, having no means for building fires. Finally imminent starvation forced them to attempt an escape at night. But few of this war-party reached home. From concurrent historical events it may be assumed that this siege took place in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

Perhaps a generation after the last fight with the Shoshoni, a young Atsina brave ran away to the south with the young wife of the tribal chief, Old Bald Eagle. The husband was so filled with longing for her that he induced the whole tribe to go in search of his fickle spouse. They at length found the runaway pair living among the Arapaho, and this is probably the visit to that tribe, about the year 1820, so often referred to as the return to their people. The location of the Arapaho at that time is not known to the Atsina, except that it was somewhere near Platte river.[2] After recovering his wife, the chief started to lead his people back to their northern home. On this journey, while camping on Rosebud river, Montana, they were attacked by a large party of Sioux and so severely defeated that they fled, leaving half their women prisoners among the enemy. The Sioux, however, must have been over-supplied with wives just at that time, for in a few days they provided the captives with food and clothing and sent them to overtake their people. The women travelled constantly and reached the Atsina camp on the Musselshell in two days and two nights. The chief lived to return with his young wife to their former camping-ground, but his people had become greatly weakened in numbers after years of wandering

[2] About this period the allied Arapaho and Cheyenne occupied the country from the North Platte to southern Colorado, extending into western Nebraska and Kansas.

among hostile tribes.[3]

A year after the fight with the Sioux on the Rosebud occurred another engagement with the same relentless enemy. The scene was south of the Missouri, on Wolf creek, which empties into the Judith, in central Montana. The Sioux forces were stronger than the Atsina, and for a time the battle was in their favor. The hero of this occasion was a poor young man who had won no honors and was even without a horse to ride. He painted and dressed according to the vision he had received while fasting, and forcibly taking a splendid pinto pony from a chief's wife, who was guarding it, he rode into the fight. His bravery was that of a madman: he was everywhere at once, striking the Sioux down on all sides and spreading terror in their ranks, his actions so greatly encouraging his tribesmen that they rallied and won the day. The Sioux afterward sent word to the Atsina that they should take good care of such a valiant warrior, and stories and songs of his wonderful deeds on that day are still heard in Dakota camps. Sitting Woman, the first chief of that name, was leader of this party. It was during his lifetime that a hunting party of thirty lodges in the sweet-grass hills were beset by Sioux and all but two of the men were killed or captured. The two escaped by riding the famous pinto horse.

The next battle was in the Bearpaw mountains, northern Montana, where a large party of Sioux made a fierce assault on the Atsina camp while the men were out hunting buffalo. They heard the noise of attack and rushed for the Dakota as only men can when fighting for their women and children. The hand-to-hand conflict ended in defeat for the Sioux, but the loss to the Atsina was heavy, and to add further to their grief was the fact that their wonderful pinto war-horse was wounded. "The reason of that was that when Sitting Woman was killed in the previous battle they trimmed the pinto's tail; that weakened his spirit-power, and besides that someone thoughtlessly loaded him with buffalo-meat after a hunt. On account of that the enemy were able to hit him with a bullet. He died in a few days, and the whole camp mourned as if a chief had fallen."

[3] The Apsaroke tell of the time when the Atsina, returning from the South, crossed their country and were attacked by them. The aggressors were greatly superior in numbers, and the wayfarers were so overcome by the first day's fighting that they fled in the night, leaving most of their camp supplies. The Apsaroke claim they would have exterminated the tribe that day but for the bravery of an Atsina, Iron Robe, who fought with such fury that nothing could stand before him.

Then followed, according to the narration, a battle near Fort Benton, at about the time of its establishment as a trading-post. A party of Atsina and Bloods started to the post to traffic, and as they came near they encountered a party of Sioux, who were planning to attack the fort. The Dakota were the victors, and all but four of the Bloods and Atsina were killed. Comes In Sight Yellow, Flies This Way, Sacred Plume, and Not Liked By His Parents escaped, and afterward became great warriors and chiefs.[4]

Under the leadership of an unknown chief of the Bloods, a combined party of that tribe and Atsina went south in search of the Apsaroke, and found their camp near Lodgegrass creek, in south-central Montana. The Apsaroke scouts had watched their coming, and knowing their strength had prepared for the conflict by digging pits for the women and children. The battle was bitterly fought throughout the day, and although the Apsaroke were practically defeated, the attacking war-party withdrew under cover of night.

[4] Notwithstanding the discrepancies in the accounts, this fight is evidently the one that occurred not at Fort Benton, but at Fort McKenzie, on the west bank of the Marias, a few miles above its mouth. In April, 1842, after having made way for Fort F.A.C. (named after Chardon, the trader) on the north bank of the Missouri at the mouth of the Judith, its buildings were burned. Fort Lewis, on the south side of the river, at the head of the first rapids above the present Fort Benton, was next established, in the winter of 1843-44; but its situation proved to be unfavorable for Indian trade, and in the spring of 1846 Major Alexander Culbertson dismantled it and rafted the logs to the site of Fort Benton, where the celebrated post of that name, although known also as Fort Lewis during the succeeding four years, was built. It was maintained as a trading-post until acquired by the Government for military purposes in 1869. The fight alluded to occurred late in August, 1832, during the stay of Maximilian, Prince of Wied-Neuwied, at Fort McKenzie. While a trading party of thirty lodges of Piegan (and Atsina?), under Lame Bull, was encamped under the walls of the fort, they were suddenly charged upon at dawn by a large party of Assiniboin warriors, said to number fifteen hundred. As the garrison thought the post was being attacked, its full force of seventy men opened fire on the assailants. The gates of the stockade were opened to receive the Piegan, but in the excitement the entrance became blocked and about twenty-five men, women, and children were there killed by the Assiniboin. The Piegan to the number of five hundred lodges were then camped about three miles above, and when the Assiniboin appeared, the two tribes engaged in a running fight, but the Assiniboin were forced finally to flee, losing six or eight, while the Piegan lost about forty. That the Atsina are not mentioned may be because they were fewer than their Piegan allies. It is said that in the fall of 1834 the same Assiniboin band cut off sixty lodges of Atsina encamped near Snow mountain, about seventy-five miles from Fort Benton, killing about four hundred, only one escaping to tell the tale.

Again a large war-party under the father of Running Fisher went against the Apsaroke, meeting the enemy near Owl Hill butte, north of the Musselshell. This affair proved to be little more than a game of charge and countercharge, with few killed on either side. The expedition was evidently for the purpose of punishing the Mountain Crows for a severe blow they had dealt in an attack on the Atsina camp on the south side of the Yellowstone, when the Atsina had been compelled to swim the river in their attempt to escape. Their ammunition and bowstrings becoming wet, the Apsaroke found them an easy prey, killing every person except two small boys. The fighting strength of the Atsina in this engagement was forty warriors.

Shortly following the last two fights an enduring truce was effected between the Atsina and the Apsaroke. The Mountain Crows held themselves somewhat aloof in the same superior manner they assumed toward their kindred, but the River Crows became quite friendly with the new allies. So marked grew the friendship, indeed, that it threatened to end in the permanent withdrawal of the River Crows, and their more powerful tribesmen sent word that unless they returned to the Crow country by a specified time they would be treated as enemies. The alacrity with which they heeded the warning and returned to their old haunts has assumed practically the nature of a tribal joke.

The reminiscences of the present generation of warriors are replete with stories of strife against their former allies, the Blackfeet, following the severance of their friendly relations in 1862. Once when Running Fisher and White And Yellow Cow were boys, their people were encamped on both sides of Beaver creek, east of the Little Rockies. The encampment was attacked by a party of Bloods and Piegan, and so furious was the assault that the Atsina became demoralized and all the people on one side of the creek were slaughtered. Many of the invaders were killed, but the victory was with them. A little later, in 1866, some three hundred Atsina were slain by the Blackfeet in a single engagement, which instilled such fear in the survivors that in the following year they refused to go to Fort Benton for their share of the supplies then being distributed among the Montana Indians.

In 1867, a few years after peace had been effected between the Apsaroke and the Atsina, a large party of both tribes were dwelling close together near Cypress mountains in northern Montana. In the camp were three great war-leaders, the Atsina Sitting Woman, the second of that name, and Twists His Tail and Lone Tree of the Apsaroke.

A small returning war-party reporting that they had seen thirty lodges of Blackfeet some distance away, great excitement was created in the camp of the allies, for here was an opportunity to win easy victory over their enemy. Sitting Woman, whose medicine was the sun, called all the chiefs and warriors into his lodge, where he made medicine in preparation for the coming battle. For a long time he sang and talked to his sacred objects, and then told the watching warriors that it was good, that they would have an easy victory. Twists His Tail opened his sacred bundle, and through a hoop taken from it gazed into the land of the unknown, following the action with a similar promise of success. Then Lone Tree, whose medicine is the eagle, was asked to make medicine and tell them what he saw. He was held in awe, and when he made medicine it was in his own lodge, the flaps of which were closed tightly, and no women were permitted in or near it; only old warriors and medicine-men were allowed within, while around it gathered the many warriors anxiously waiting for the vision. In the lodge Lone Tree made his incense of ground-cedar; then, wrapped in a buffalo-robe with the hairy side outward, and with a stuffed eagle on his head, he sat close to the rising smoke. He assumed the attitude and simulated the actions of an eagle, whistling and singing and looking constantly about. These incantations he continued for a long time, then throwing off the character of eagle and turning to the expectant men, he said: "Sitting Woman, your father is the Sun; he is able to see everywhere, even the smallest insects in the thick grass. Why does he deceive you? I see the blood of our people flowing toward us from the camp of the enemy, and the bird refuses to drink it." Throughout the camp ran the unexpressed fear of impending danger, but the Atsina chiefs would not heed the warning of Lone Tree, and on the following day the greatest war-party that ever set out from an Atsina camp started off, led by the proud Sitting Woman and Twists His Tail. Scouts soon returned with word that the thirty lodges were decoys and that beyond were large camps of the enemy. Still the chiefs would not heed the warning.

The Apsaroke held a parley among themselves and expressed their belief that the enemy were too strong to be successfully assailed. The majority of the Atsina had forced them into this undertaking against their better judgment. They therefore planned to proceed to the attack, make one swift rush, gather as many horses as they could, and, if the odds seemed to be against them, retreat at once. The attack was splendid, but from the timber back of the decoy camp came such

a horde of Bloods, Piegan, and Sarsi as they had never met before. The wily Crows followed their plan and escaped with slight loss; the Atsina, however, were not equally fortunate, suffering so greatly that the story of this battle will pass through the generations as the worst defeat in the history of the tribe.

According to Running Fisher, when he was a young man the tribe had fifteen hundred lodges which, on a conservative estimate, would give them a population, during the closing years of their primitive life, of from five thousand to seven thousand. It is difficult to reconcile this statement with that of Lewis and Clark, who estimated the "Fall Indians" at two hundred and sixty lodges, or twenty-five hundred souls. It should be remembered, however, that the explorers do not, in this instance, write with the authority of actual observation. They never saw the Atsina tribe.

The Atsina have been mentioned comparatively little in history, partly, no doubt, because of their isolation and of their indisposition to show the same hostility toward advancing civilization as their neighbors, and more because of their alliance with the overshadowing Blackfoot tribes in the days when the early history of their country was in the making. It would seem to have become almost a habit with those writers who have referred to the Atsina to speak slightingly of them. Yet the record of their tribal wars shows no indication of deficiency in courage or vigor. The Apsaroke say of them that they were a fine people, not given to quarrelling, and reasonable in parley and argument. The pleasure of the writer's experience with them was unmarred; indeed the Atsina proved to be one of the most agreeable and tractable tribes he had ever met.

With the close of their buffalo-hunting days the Atsina have settled down in the foothills of the Little Rockies. In their material culture they closely resemble the tribes about them. They were essentially a hunting people, raising no crops of any sort, and subsisting principally on the flesh of the buffalo, which primitively they took by decoying and driving them between two converging rows of stone or brush shelters behind which crouched the hunters in concealment. Each, as the herd came opposite him, revealed himself suddenly, which, aided by his shouts and gesticulations, kept the buffalo in motion and eventually forced them over an abrupt bank into a corral at its base. Their dwelling was the buffalo-skin tipi, and the domiciles of the medicine-men were painted to represent the spirit-animals or objects revealed to them in

their visions or procured by inheritance. Before horses were acquired, perhaps in the early years of the nineteenth century, the dog-travois was the means of conveyance; later, vehicles of the same kind, only larger, were drawn by horses. Pottery is said to have been made a long time ago, but not within the memory of those now living. The clothing of the men consisted of moccasins, hip-length leggings, loin-cloth, and, about the shoulders, a buffalo-robe as the weather demanded, or a shirt when the occasion justified gala garments; while the women were clad in moccasins, knee-length leggings, the one-piece dress falling from the shoulders to mid-calf, and in severe weather the buffalo-robe. Save the robe, all these garments were made of deerskin, or, excepting the woman's dress, of weathered buffalo-skin, and all were ornamented more or less with dyed porcupine-quill embroidery.

POLITICAL AND CEREMONIAL ORGANIZATION

The tribe was composed of ten bands, all under one head, who, with the chiefs of the bands, formed the council. The head-chief conducted treaties on the part of the tribe, selected camp sites, and directed tribal affairs generally. When he and the council disagreed, two young men, each representing a faction, were sent out with a bundle of sticks. Passing around the camp in opposite directions they stopped at each sub-chief's lodge and asked which side of the question he favored. If he wished to advocate the side represented by the first messenger to visit him, he took one of the sticks; if not, he awaited the coming of the other. Having completed the circuit of the camp, the two young men returned to the head-chief's lodge, the decision of those represented by the messenger with the fewer sticks was accepted by all, and the result was publicly announced by the herald.

On the death of the chief, the man holding the next highest rank in the honors of war was unanimously elected by the council. There could be no dispute as to the successor's qualifications, since every warrior's record was known to all. The names of the head-chiefs from 1856 to 1908 are: Running Fisher (known also as Sleeps Above), father of the present chief; Sitting Woman; Sitting Woman (son of the former); Black Raven; Bear Child; and Running Fisher.

The tribe separated into bands during the winter and at various times during the summer for the purpose of hunting. On these occasions,

however, they were still subject to the command of the head-chief, and if one band were threatened, the others came quickly to its aid in response to a messenger sent by the chief.

The ceremonial life of the Atsina found expression mainly in the rites of a system of societies — the Fly, Crazy, Fox (kit-fox), Dog, and Drum organizations.[5] Membership in these societies depended, as in those of the Mandan, on age, but the Atsina exhibited a feature not to be found in the case of the other tribe. Among the Mandan each organization consisted of a single group of men, who all together passed step by step through the various grades of the system. A society ceremony could be observed by only a single set of men, until, acquiring the rites of the society next above them, they relinquished their claim to those of the lower. Among the Atsina, on the contrary, while all men whose age lay between certain limits had the right to perform the ceremony appropriate to that age, they were organized, not in one company, but in several, each one of which gave the ceremony without the assistance of any of the others; and a company had the right to perform the same ceremony more than once. These companies bore names such as Ugly Dogs, Young Sheep, White Noses, — names which they always retained as they passed through the various grades of the system, — and each of them, as it passed the age-limit, acquired thereby the right to perform the ceremony of the next higher society.

The five ceremonies were of a distinctly religious character, although they were accompanied by acts intended only to amuse, and while they differed greatly in their themes, they were much alike in their inception and method of procedure. Always they were performed at the request of some member of one of the companies, who thus redeemed a vow so to do in return for the recovery of a relative from illness, or the preservation of his own life in the midst of peril. His prayer having

[5] By some informants the Fly society is said to have been outside of the regular order. Perhaps the divergence of opinion is to be taken as meaning that this society was in a state of transition from a special ceremonial organization to a place in the series of recognized societies. Some say also that there was another organization, between the Dogs and the Drums. The Atsina usually include in this succession of ceremonies the Star Dance. It appears, however, that this, even more than the Fly society, was outside the regular order, inasmuch as some men seem to have performed it early in their career, others much later, and still others not at all. Furthermore, while all the other ceremonial organizations were called by a name analogous to "society," there is no such term applied to the performers of the Star Dance.

been granted, he sought the services of some old man to "erect the lodge." The one so selected had charge of the ceremony. The lodge, which faced eastward, consisted of two ordinary tipis made into one. Each member of the company secured the aid of an old man versed in the ritual, who was known as his "Grandfather." Each morning of the ceremony the Grandfathers painted the dancers and (except in the rites of the Fly society) the dancers' wives, and each night they, in company with the women, left the camp to observe certain rites by which the old men transferred their medicine to the dancers through the medium of their wives.[6]

In the dance of the Fly society, which lasted but one day, the performers were of four grades: the leader, who, unpainted, wore a buffalo-robe, hairy side out, and carried a wand; the pledger of the ceremony, who was painted yellow; four "elder brothers," members of companies which had already given the Fly Dance, who, painted yellow, acted as guides in the dance; and finally, the rank and file of members, who were painted with white stripes across cheeks and nose, on arms and legs and across the abdomen, and with a band of red around the neck. The Grandfathers chewed an herb which they rubbed on the dancers to make them brave and strong. Each of the ordinary dancers carried a stick about three feet long with a cactus thorn at the end. About noon the members of the society assembled in their lodge and began to walk about the circular encampment. Four times they halted and formed a circle, then danced up and down without shifting from their places. While thus dancing they held their robes outstretched, wing-fashion, and made a humming noise like mosquitoes. At the close of a dance, while still forming a circle, all fell to their knees and touched their heads to the ground. When the fourth dance was ended, the Flies were at liberty during the next two hours or so to pursue all bystanders and to prick them with their gads. At the close of this sport they gathered in the centre of the camp and ran four races, then proceeded to their lodge and feasted on meat which one of their members had cooked.

A man who had vowed to give the Crazy Dance went with a pipe to an old man familiar with its performance. If the pipe was accepted, the old man became the "Maker of the Crazy Dance," and he directed

[6] For a similar custom among other tribes, see The Medicine Fraternity of The Arikara, and the Lewis and Clark Journals under date of January 5, 1805.

the members of the company to choose Grandfathers to paint them. Every member of the company was expected to participate; if one should chance to be absent, some relative took his place.

The dancers were painted yellow to the knees and elbows, and wore robes with a hole cut near the top, through which the head passed, poncho fashion. Two loose strips, at the end of which were feathers and claws of an owl, hung down the sides from the shoulders. They carried bows and arrows to which crow-feathers were attached, and whistles of eagle wing-bones. One side of the head was daubed with clay, the ears were stuffed with a spongy fungus like a puffball, and at the right temple was worn an owl-head. The dancers also carried straight staffs, about four feet in length, from which were suspended the hoofs and claws of various animals. Two or three lodges were combined to make one sufficiently capacious for the ceremony, and inside was erected a very small lodge, in which the man giving the dance remained for the night. The ceremony lasted four days and four nights, but the dancing continued until darkness, when the dancers' wives accompanied the Grandfathers beyond the camp-circle to receive medicine from them. Each woman, on her return to the lodge, was kissed by all the dancers in turn, and her husband ended by kissing the Grandfather.

In the morning, when the performers had been painted, they gathered in the lodge, the dancers' wives taking their places behind the Grandfathers. The members marched once around the lodge and then stopped, the singers commenced to sing, and the dance began. When the dancers sat down to rest, they thrust their bows and arrows into the ground in front of them, and there they remained during the entire dance except for a certain brief time, when they were pulled out and held first to one shoulder and then to the other, after which they were again thrust into the ground. Each time the singing began, the principal Grandfather arose, and all the others with him.

On the fourth day a fire was kindled in the centre of the lodge, and the Grandfather said, "It is time for the Crazy men to dance in the fire." Thereupon the relatives of the dancers brought in gifts of clothing and robes for the Grandfathers, who took them home and then returned as the members began to dance around the glowing embers of what had been a blazing fire, with each circuit approaching closer and closer. Suddenly all leaped upon the coals and stamped upon them until every ember was extinguished; then running outside and standing close together, they discharged arrows straight up into the

air and immediately looked at the ground, exhibiting their bravery by standing motionless among the falling shafts. It was observed that as the time for this part of the performance approached, the spectators hurriedly drew back to escape the falling arrows. Three wordless songs followed, the Crazy men dancing the while, after which they were free to play pranks and do all the mischief they could until nightfall. For a time they went about shooting people with blunt arrows. They said the opposite of what they meant and did the reverse of what they were told to do, and in everything they acted as if bereft of reason. The only protection one could have was to seek refuge behind one of the Grandfathers. It is said that if during these antics a Crazy dancer became displeased with anyone, he would chew a root and blow it toward the offender, paralyzing him until the dancer touched him and blew upon him again.

The dance of the Fox society was always followed by the removal of the camp to new ground. It was initiated as were the other dances, the man who had promised its performance soliciting the aid of an old man, and each man of the company selecting a Grandfather. The ceremony lasted four days and four nights, the actual dancing taking place during the daytime. Four members of each company having the right to perform the Fox Dance carried each a staff about seven feet long, bent at the end like a shepherd's crook, wound with otter-skin and further decorated with eagle-feathers. The bearers of these staffs were of known bravery, and were supposed never to retreat from where they planted the standards in the ground. In the dance the four staff-bearers were distinguished by the skin and feathers of a crow worn about the neck, while other participants were painted red on the face, with four pipes in black on each cheek, the stems downward and the bowls toward the eyes. Each ordinary dancer wore a girdle of prairie-dog skin, and eagle-down in the hair. A virgin was chosen to represent the Fox Mother, whose children the dancers were supposed to be. The members entered the lodge in the centre of the camp-circle, and seated themselves in two rows, one on each side of the lodge, extending from the door to the rear. A staff-bearer sat at each end of each row, while the Fox Mother was seated at the rear beside the dancers who formed the end of the southern row. Between the lines and near the door was erected a small lodge where slept the man who had asked for the dance. The men formed a circle and danced toward the left, while the Fox Mother moved outside the circle in

an opposite direction. On the last night the relatives of the members brought gifts for the Grandfathers, who sat at the rear of the lodge. (Other informants say that the members danced before the tipis of four prominent chiefs, who made gifts to them.) Early in the morning the camp moved, and halted about half-way to the chosen camp site, when the dancers carried some distance ahead the gifts which had been received. The warriors then charged upon the heap, each man selecting from it an article similar to something he had captured in battle.

The dance of the Dog society resembled in its principal features the ceremonies of the other societies. There were two leaders, who wore shirts, the one yellow and the other red, trimmed with crow-feathers. Each of the other members wore, over one shoulder and under the other, a baldric of red cloth, whose end, trailing the ground, was, in conflict, transfixed with a staff thrust into the ground. Thus the warrior was not permitted to retreat until some one not a member of the organization drove him away, speaking as if to a dog. All Dog Dancers carried eagle-bone whistles and small wands from which hung deer-hoof rattles, and all wore eagle-feather head-dresses. This dance lasted four days and took place in the usual enlarged lodge.

The ceremony of the Drum society was performed by the bravest men, the most experienced warriors, in the tribe. They possessed a drum which, if the dance had been performed a short time before, they might in battle throw toward the enemy. The members then ran to it and stood there fighting, until either the enemy gave way or they themselves were killed. Like the others, this ceremony lasted four days and four nights. Four leaders bore crooked staffs wrapped with sacred white buffalo-skin, and all were painted red with white dots representing hail and with zigzag lines for lightning. Their only clothing was a loin-cloth, and their only ornament a plume of eagle-down in the hair.

The ceremony of the *Benohtyíithan,* a society of women, was performed when a woman had dreamed of the dance or had pledged it on condition that her child or other relative recover from illness. When under these circumstances the woman desired the ceremony, she went to some old man and asked him to take charge of the dance. He arranged for the erection of a large dance-lodge and selected two old men as singers. Four members were leaders and four younger women assistants, while two girls represented buffalo calves. Each woman wore a buffalo-skin cape to which two feathers were attached to symbolize

horns. The ceremony lasted four days, the leaders usually giving the signal to dance by standing up and commencing to sing. The women did not lift their feet from the ground, but simply swayed from side to side. In the centre of the lodge was a pool of water, and during the progress of the ceremony a warrior was called forth and told to drink from the pool like a buffalo. On the fourth day the women, simulating a herd of buffalo, went to the river and drank. At the water's edge a man lay in wait for them with a gun. They pretended to scent him and acted as if suspicious of danger, pawing the ground and sniffing the air. The hunter shot and one of the women fell.

The Soldier organization of the Atsina was created anew each spring when the bands assembled after the usual winter's separation, those who had been members during the previous year, or at least such as wished to join again, meeting and electing four leaders. The Soldiers had the usual powers to punish disobedience or offences against tribal laws. The "joined lodge," their meeting place, pitched in the centre of the camp, was the rendezvous of members and the vital point of the community. The two youngest members of the society acted as servants, levying upon the women of the tribe for meat and attending to its cooking in the Soldiers' lodge. Leading members of the organization frequently pitched their individual domiciles in the centre of the encampment near the "joined lodge."

RELIGION

It is believed that when a man dies he goes northward to *Básnabe,* the Big Sand, where he joins the spirits of those that have gone before. There the spirits find plenty of game and follow the customs and habits of their former existence. The ghosts of the dead are believed to haunt graves, to travel with the whirlwind, and to have the power of shooting invisible arrows into people.

There are three souls, or perhaps it should be said that the soul has three forms: *watánbetato,* black shadow, which goes with one during the day; *níthun-watánbetato,* light-black shadow, the ghost that goes about doing mischief; *natsínnuit-betato,* invisible shadow, which is the spirit that goes to the Big Sand over *Tsukyunbya,* the Milky Way.

The three principal deities are *Ihtyébi-níhaat,* Spider Above,[7]

[7] *Níhaat,* the Spider, is the culture hero of the Atsina, and when the wonder-working

Itástha, Last Child, and *Nítáwitha,* First Child. Spider Above, the most potent, is the more often supplicated, but the Indians are vague as to the nature of his power. Last Child is said to have created the earth; later he killed many monsters and wicked people, and taught the buffalo to eat grass instead of people, as had been their habit. He stands second in importance. First Child, the least powerful of the three, is the god of the elements and of growing things, causing the winds to blow and the grasses and trees to flourish.

With the Atsina, as with other tribes, fasting should be considered an essential part of their religious practices. A young Atsina was advised by his father to go up in the mountains and fast, that he might come into communication with the spirits and be given visions and supernatural strength to make him a great warrior.

Running Fisher's account of two of his fastings is a good illustration. His father told him that he ought to suffer, so that the spirits would pity him and give him power. The young man washed himself and anointed his body with white clay in which was mixed perfume; with only a buffalo-robe around him he climbed the highest peak he could find in the Little Rockies, building there a brush shelter just large enough to enable him to lie down. He cried aloud to the spirits during the day, but at night he slept. He was there four days and four nights, and touched neither food nor drink during that time. Toward the last his voice became very weak. The fourth night he experienced a vision in which he saw a large grizzly bear facing him. His heart beat very fast. "Why do you cry?" asked the bear. "I wish to become a great warrior and a strong man," replied Running Fisher. The bear promised these things, and told him that he would attain great age and become a chief in his tribe. Then the bear went down the mountain, and a little later Running Fisher followed. He looked out from behind some large rocks and saw four bears walking upright like men; they seemed to be playing a game, running up and down a tall tree as fast as they could. The grizzly put his forelegs around the tree and shook it to the top. Running Fisher watched them a long time in the moonlight, then he went back to his shelter. At dawn he came down to the encampment.

white man appeared the name was applied to him. It has become the habit for interpreters to assign the secondary instead of the primary meaning to *níhaat,* and translate the native name of the deity into "white man above." A similar misconception is found among the northern branch of the Cheyenne.

After his father's death Running Fisher fasted and mourned in great sorrow for many days, and when the camp moved he would not ride horseback but walked barefoot, clad only in a piece of old lodge-cover. One day he left the camp and climbed to the summit of a lofty butte. As he sat there with head bowed in sorrow, he heard the rustling of many wings, and looking up saw a flock of buzzards circling about him. He gazed at them, forgetting his grief for a moment, then his sorrow came upon him again and he fell into a trance. In his dreams a little boy came to him, and said, "Come! My father wants you in his lodge." Running Fisher arose and followed. Soon he came to the lodge, and entering, saw sitting there an old man, whom he recognized as a buzzard transformed into human shape. The old man spoke:

"My son, why are you fasting and torturing your body?"

"I am a poor man," answered Running Fisher, "and my heart is heavy within me. I want some one to pity me, so that I may become a great warrior and a chief."

Then the old man said, "It is well!" and pointing to the sides of the lodge, he continued: "There are all my possessions. Choose what you will."

Running Fisher looked, and saw at the back of the lodge, in the place of honor, many parfléches beautifully adorned and tempting to the eye, and near the door, thrown on the ground in disorder, a pile of old bags and rubbish. Lying across the pile was a thong with a single downy feather at the end of it, and the faster, disregarding the beautiful bags, chose this feather.

The old man spoke: "You have chosen wisely, my son; with that feather you shall become great in war and chief of your people." Then he pointed to the back of the lodge, and said, "Look that way," and Running Fisher, turning, saw himself standing there dressed and painted as if for battle, with the single downy feather in his hair.

"Look this way," said the old man, pointing to one side, and Running Fisher looked and beheld a scene of battle. In the thick of the fight he saw himself performing valiant deeds. Then he heard singing, and the old man said, "This is the song you shall sing when you are making your battle medicine."

On awaking from this trance Running Fisher returned to the camp, and the good fortune promised in that revelation has always been his.[8]

[8] This vision is the most sacred incident of the old man's life. It was with great reluc-

As with many tribes, certain pipes are sacred and greatly venerated by the Atsina. They originally had ten of these, but, many having been buried with their custodians, there now remain but two, the bundles containing which are opened each spring, when prayers are offered to the spirits.

The following legend is related of the pipe now in the possession of Sleeping Bear:

"A man and his family dwelt apart from the large circular encampment. Toward night a dark threatening cloud appeared at the horizon, and, fearing a storm, the man told his wife to fasten everything securely. Soon the wind blew fiercely, lightning flashed, and rain fell in torrents. In the morning the people came to the man's lodge and found him sitting there holding a pipe, but all his earthly possessions had been carried away by Thunderbird, who had brought it."

So far as they can be traced, the keepers of this pipe have been Sitting Woman (the first chief of that name), White Bird, Big Beaver, Bull Lodge, Sitting High, and Sleeping Bear. A custodian keeps the pipe four years, or sometimes longer. When he wishes to transfer it to someone else, he calls in a number of men and they decide on some one worthy to become its custodian. Prayers are then offered to Thunderbird, and just at daybreak the party proceed to the lodge of the chosen man, who is called out to receive the pipe. If he smokes it, his acceptance is signified, and the former custodian follows the example of Thunderbird by taking all the property of the new keeper. It is supposed that within a year the latter will be the wealthiest man of the tribe.

The second medicine pipe, now kept by Otter Robe, was obtained long ago during a truce with the Canadian Blackfeet; by them it is believed to have been procured in the following manner:

"A stranger came and told the people of the beauties of the land to the south, offering to guide them thither and show them the thousands of buffalo that grazed on the plains where the grass grew tall and luxuriant. Many accepted the offer, and the party set out. They were crossing a large body of water in their canoes, and stopped on an island for the night. When they awoke, they discovered that their guide had deserted them, taking with him all the canoes. In their distress they cried aloud, and an otter appeared and asked them why they wept.

tance that he related it, saying, "This is my life; I have never told of it before."

When they told him, he assured them that someone would come to their assistance, and soon two enormous swans appeared, carrying in their bills a pipe, which they gave to the Blackfeet, commanding them to climb upon their backs. In this manner the swans conveyed them to the mainland and flew away, and the Blackfeet travelled northward until they came to their own country."

After this episode, it is said, the pipe was worshipped with prayers, and its possession always assured victory in war, power to acquire wealth, and general good fortune to the people.

The keepers of this pipe among the Atsina have been No Teeth, Rabbit Tail, Bird Chief, Spotted Bull, Sitting Woman I, Sitting Woman II, Deer, Chief Eagle, Fire Elk, Spotted White Cow, War Eagle Bonnet, Bear Walks On The Hillside, Mean Wolf, Lame Bull, Crow Chief, White Bird, High Bird, and Otter Robe.

The third custodian of this pipe, Bird Chief, was the great-greatgrandfather of a man now about thirty-five years of age, which would place the time when Bird Chief had it at least as early as the middle of the eighteenth century.

Medicine-men received their supernatural powers from the spirits, which appeared in visions to fasters in the hills. Each had his own particular herbs and roots for treating the sick, and retained all knowledge of them as a personal secret. Medicine-men, as healers, were called *natúnheya,* literally, "doctor." As magicians, they were *betáuhua,* "doers of mystery," and those who made prophesies were *kánatyi,* "dreamers." The healers could teach anyone their secrets for pay, and they sometimes conferred with each other and exchanged roots and herbs and the secrets relative to their use.

In treating the sick the medicine-man sang over them, shook rattles, and performed the usual incantations, in addition to administering infusions of herbs. They examined the patient from head to foot, sometimes putting the ear close to the body as if to listen, and continually striking the subject with their hands. Finally they would tap a selected part of the body, and say, "Here is the sickness." Then perhaps they would scoop their hands together on the skin, pretending to fill them with the disease and throw it aside, or they might put the mouth to the spot and pretend to suck out some animal or object, claiming that to be the cause of the trouble.

The mystery-workers sometimes displayed their powers in the form of jugglery and legerdemain, performing feats common to all parts of

the world, such as swallowing large knives, or perhaps a long stick cut from a thorn bush.

MYTHS AND TALES

GRAY HAWK PLUME

There was once a chief who had three children, the handsomest in the tribe. Two were daughters, one a little girl and the other a young woman; the son was the eldest by a year or two, and was called Gray Hawk Plume. This youth had within the lodge of his father a smaller one which he called his own.

One night as he sat in this inner lodge a young woman entered. She kept her face covered with her robe and would not reveal her identity, but the whole night through she sat and talked with him, and her voice was like the ripple of a mountain stream. Night after night she came and conversed with the young man, but never for an instant would she drop the robe from her face, and all that Gray Hawk Plume could see was her dusky eyes. In the daytime his mind went constantly to his strange visitor, and he wondered who she could be. The attraction of the unknown held him as in a spell, and finally he determined to learn the identity of his lover. That night as the woman turned to leave, he leaned over and put a streak of red paint on the back of her robe.

The next morning he asked his father to announce a dance, for he knew that this would bring everyone out, and that he thus would have an opportunity to solve the mystery. Three times he walked around the dance-circle without seeing the mark of red on the robe of a woman, but the fourth time he caught sight of it, and his heart leaped, for now at last he would see her face. Eagerly he stepped in front of her and looked into the face of — his own sister!

Gray Hawk Plume felt his heart turning to stone, and drawing his robe over his head, he walked slowly out of the village across the prairie to a solitary butte, where he sat all day, his eyes fastened on the distant horizon, yet seeing nothing. Finally he resolved to leave his home, for he could not bear to face his sister, knowing that she had deceived and disgraced him.

His father made a canoe for him and painted it red, and Gray Hawk Plume piled his belongings into it and was about to push off, when his sister came and begged him to take her. "I shall have nothing more to

do with you!" he replied. She called after him: "When you return, you will not find our people!"

Gray Hawk Plume had floated many sleeps down the river in his red canoe, when he came to a country much unlike his own. He tied his boat and climbed to the top of the bank. There were few trees, and the prairie rolled in front of him as far as the eye could see. He walked until the sun disappeared over the edge, when he approached a lodge in which lived an old woman. She asked him whence he had come and what he sought.

"I am looking for a man with red hair," he answered

Said she: "I fear you will never find him, my son, but I shall help you all I can," and she gave him a root which had the power of putting people to sleep.

The next day Gray Hawk Plume went on until he reached a stream. Beside it stood a tall pole with a wild swan resting on the top, which screamed a warning as soon as it saw him. Gray Hawk Plume instantly transformed himself into a young woman, just as another young woman came out of a lodge that stood in the thicket. She smiled at Gray Hawk Plume, and taking him by the hand led him into the lodge, where he saw several people, among them a young man with hair that glowed like the setting sun. "This is to be my sister-in-law," said the young woman. Red Hair was nothing loath, and said, "In four days I shall marry her."

The family of Red Hair were compelled to watch him closely, for the fame of his beautiful locks had spread throughout the land, and many enemies desired to see his scalp dangling from their lodge-poles. So the family was pleased that he was to have a wife, and they said to one another, "Now she can look after him."

On the third day Gray Hawk Plume and Red Hair walked to the top of a high hill and sat looking over the country. Red Hair lay down in the grass, and Gray Hawk Plume held under his companion's nose the root the old woman had given him. Soon Red Hair slept. Gray Hawk Plume shook him, and cried, "It is time to go back!" but the other did not stir. Then quickly he took his knife and cut the throat of the sleeper and scalped him.

Gray Hawk Plume then resumed his natural form and started back to the river, and on his way, passing the lodge of the old woman, he gave back the root and with it a wisp of the beautiful red hair.

The father of Red Hair knew his son was dead the instant it happened,

and with his relatives followed the trail of Gray Hawk Plume. They were almost upon him when he was still some distance from the river, but he called to the red canoe, which came flying through the air, and in it Gray Hawk Plume paddled away to the north as if it had been in the water.

When he reached the old camping-place, it was deserted. At one side stood a mean little lodge, from which the smoke was rising, and nearby were two small boys playing the wheel game. He asked them what had become of all the people, and they replied, "We will not tell you unless you give us some of that red hair." So Gray Hawk Plume gave a little to each of the boys, and they told him, "Your sister turned into a bear, and ate everyone but your father, mother, little sister, and us. We hid in a cave and escaped. No one could kill her, for no arrows would penetrate her flesh."

Just then out of the lodge came Gray Hawk Plume's younger sister, who exclaimed with joy when she caught sight of him. "Our sister is very cruel to us," she said. "She burns us with fire-sticks and does not give us enough to eat," and she showed him where her sister had burned her. The young man shot a rabbit, which he gave to the little girl, and as she reentered the lodge he heard the elder sister ask, "Where did you get that rabbit?" and the other reply, "While I was dipping up water at the spring, the rabbit ran out of the bushes and I threw the horn cup at it and killed it." It seemed that the woman believed, for she said, "Cook it, and I will eat it."

After she had eaten, she said suddenly, "You must have seen Gray Hawk Plume. I smell him!" and grasping a flaming brand she burned the younger sister's arm, but could wring no confession from her. Then she burned her father and mother, saying, "Tell me, are you hiding Gray Hawk Plume?" But they of course denied all knowledge of him.

The next day the younger sister went again for water, and Gray Hawk Plume said to her, "Try to find out from your sister how it would be possible to kill her." So the little girl asked her sister, who said, "By shooting my little finger." Then she placed her hand over her mouth when she realized what she had unthinkingly said, and seizing the little girl, she burned her severely because her secret had been discovered.

When Gray Hawk Plume was told about this, he said, "Now she shall die," and transforming himself into a down-feather he let the wind blow him near the lodge. Soon the wicked sister looked out,

and seeing no one she stepped outside. Instantly Gray Hawk Plume became a man, and as his arrow pierced the end of her little finger she fell to the earth. He piled up many logs and laid her body on them, "For," said he, "it is best to destroy completely such an evil one." As her body burned, the sparks arose and became beautiful red rain, and as the drops fell they turned into bright-colored pebbles, which the little sister gathered with shouts of glee and placed in the bosom of her dress. But as the stones turned to fire and began to burn her, she ran to her brother, who blew out the flames.

Then Gray Hawk Plume said to his father, "In four days you shall see your tribe again." During the first night groans were heard all around the old camp-circle. The second night there were voices and the sound of people moving about. Then came laughter and shouting, and on the fourth night the air was filled with singing and the beating of drums. In the morning there stood a great thronging camp. Gray Hawk Plume gave his father the red scalp and told him that if he used it as his medicine it would always bring good fortune. Then he disappeared and took the form of a bright star in the sky.

CHERRY-BUSH MAN

A number of children, one boy and many girls, returning from their games, found only smouldering camp-fires where the village had been. Deserted, they followed the trail of the people. Now and again they would find a lodge-pole dropped by their parents ahead of them, and each time they would cry, "Mother, here is one of your lodge-poles!" But the parents had left the children purposely, not caring for them, and from afar would come the faint answer, "I do not care for my lodge-pole!"

The sister of the boy lagged behind the others to help her little brother, who was too young to keep up, and the two were soon left far behind. She led him to a thicket, and making him a bed of boughs, left him there to rest while she cut brush and built a small shelter, in which they lived, eating berries and roots gathered by the child-mother.

One day as the girl was looking out of the lodge, she saw a herd of elk going by, and she exclaimed:

"Brother, look at the elk! There are many passing."

The boy was sitting with head bowed and eyes cast downward, because he was growing old enough to feel ashamed of living alone

with his sister, and without looking up he replied:

"Sister, it will do us no good if I look at them."

She, however, insisted, so the boy raised his head and looked at the elk, and they all fell dead in their tracks.

The girl went out, skinned and butchered the elk, and carried the flesh and hides into the lodge. Looking at the pile of meat, she said, "I wish that meat were dried," and no sooner were the words out of her mouth than it was all perfectly dried. Lifting a hide and shaking it, she said, "I wish these hides were tanned," and so they were. She spread a number of them on the ground, and murmured to herself, "I wish these were sewn into a lodge-cover," and behold! there was a fine large one lying where the unsewn skins had been. The same day she saw a herd of buffalo passing, and again addressed her brother:

"Look at the buffalo, brother!"

"Sister, why do you want me to look at those buffalo?" he protested peevishly; but as she insisted, he raised his head, and they too fell dead. Then she skinned them, bringing the hides into the brush lodge, where she spread out a few, and said, "I wish these hides were tanned into fine robes." They at once became what she desired. Then to the others she addressed the magic words, and they became soft robes decorated with paintings. Now having everything necessary, she built and arranged her lodge.

Going then into the thicket she cut a switch from a cherry-bush, which she hung in a swing near the entrance. "I wish a child," she said; "this is going to be my boy." As she moved the hammock, the stick became a baby. Then she transferred the swing to a pole a quarter of the way around the lodge, and as it swayed, the baby became large enough to crawl. Once more it was moved, and the baby talked; and when the hammock was swung at the other side of the entrance, a handsome youth leaped out. "My son shall be called Cherry-bush Man," exclaimed the girl, as she went out of the lodge toward the thicket. "White Bear, come here! Silvertip Bear, come here!" she called, and when the two came running out of the undergrowth to her, she said, "I want you to stay here and watch over us."

One day the girl saw a Raven flying by, and she called out, "Raven, take this piece of buffalo-fat and go to the camp of my tribe, and when you fly over, drop it in the centre of the circle, and say, 'There is plenty to eat at the old campsite!' " Raven took the fat and flew to the far-away camp. There he saw all the young men playing the wheel

game, and dropping his burden, he croaked, "There is plenty to eat at the old camp site!" It happened that at this time there was a famine in the village, and when the words of the Raven were heard, the head-chief ordered some young men to the old camp to see what they could find. The scouts set forth, and where the former camp had been they saw a fine elk-skin lodge with racks of meat swinging in the wind, and buffalo grazing on the surrounding hills. When the chief heard their report, he immediately ordered his herald to bid the people prepare to journey.

When the camp was made near the elk-skin lodge, the father and the mother of the girl quickly discovered that it belonged to their daughter, and they went to her, calling, "My daughter! My daughter!" But she answered, "Keep back! You are not my father, and you are not my mother, for when I found the lodge-poles and cried out to you not to forsake me, you went on, saying that I was no daughter of yours!"

After a while, however, she seemed to relent, and calling all the people around her she divided among them the contents of a large vessel of boiling buffalo-tongues. Her parents she bade sit by her side. Meantime her brother had been sitting with bowed head.

"Brother, look at these people!" the girl commanded him. "They are the ones that deserted us!"

She repeated her words twice, but the boy would not look up. At the fourth command he raised his head slowly, and as he looked around, the people fell lifeless.

Said the girl: "Let a few of the men and women return to life, that the tribe may grow again, but let their characters be changed, that the people may be better than they were." Immediately some of them came to life, and the tribe increased, and their hearts were good.

One day while the girl, her brother, and Cherry-bush Man were seated in the lodge, the brother said:

"Nephew, you had better go on a journey for a while."

Cherry-bush Man turned to his mother. "I am a man now, I am going to travel," he said; so taking a few pairs of moccasins and a lance, he started on his journey. Soon he came upon a low lodge nearly hidden in the timber, and entering he found an ugly little man sitting there, and all around the walls many hearts hanging from thongs. He went up to the nearest one, and said, "Whose heart is this?" and the man answered, "That is my father's heart." Cherry-bush Man furtively transfixed it with his lance. Then he went around the lodge, asking about

the different hearts, and finding that they all were those of relatives of the ugly little man, he pierced each with his lance. When he reached the last one, the man said, "That is my heart." When Cherry-bush Man openly pretended to thrust his spear into it, the other screamed in terror, "Do not do that!" The youth made three feints, and at the fourth motion pierced it through, crying at the same instant, "Your people will exist no more!" The dwarf lay dead at his feet.

This was the lodge of those evil ones who, invulnerable because they always left their hearts at home in the care of the dwarf, roamed the earth murdering men and eating their flesh.

Having thus slain the cannibals, Cherry-bush Man returned to his home and told the people that there was now nothing for them to fear, for the earth was rid of the scourge that for so long had oppressed them.

BLOOD-CLOT[9]

Long ago when men killed buffalo in corrals, into which, they say, the animals, attracted by the scent, followed a man carrying a burning buffalo-chip, there lived close to the village a Bear who married one of the women. Through his strength and ferocity he became chief, and it grew to be his habit to take for himself the greater portion of each kill, which soon drove the people almost to starvation.

One day while they were butchering in the corral, the Bear appeared, as was his custom, and forced them to give up the meat. One old man, rendered desperate by hunger, concealed a lump of clotted blood, which he took home to make into soup. Entering his lodge, he closed the flap securely and dropped his prize into the rawhide cooking-pot. Heated stones were thrown in, and as the water began to boil the clot of blood turned into a child, who cried,

"Grandfather, take me out!"

Startled and mystified, the old man lifted him out.

"Swing me in the air!" said the child, and when the command was obeyed he became at once a well-grown boy, whose first request was for bow and arrows.

The next time buffalo were drawn into the corral, the tyrant came, growling, "All this meat belongs to me! No one shall touch it!" But the

[9] For the Lakota legend of Blood-clot Boy, see Volume III, The Teton Sioux

boy, hidden under the old man's robe, whispered, "Grandfather, take a bite out of a paunch, and let the Bear see you." Furious at the old man's open disregard of his command, the beast, with bloodshot eyes and jaws dripping foam, rushed at him; but the boy stepped quickly from his concealment and discharged one of his little arrows into its red, open mouth, piercing its heart. Then he pursued and killed the other Bears, all of them except one pair, which he ordered to go far into the mountains and live apart from men.

Hearing one day of a fierce Buffalo Bull with long sharp horns, ruler of a neighboring village, the youth decided to kill this monster; so he set out, though his grandfather, fearing he would come to grief, begged him not to go. After long wandering, he approached the outskirts of the strange camp and entered a solitary lodge. An old woman sat there alone.

"I am sorry to see such a handsome youth come to this place; you will surely be killed!" she said. Even as she spoke, someone kicked at the lodge-poles, and cried:

"You are here, stranger! Come with me; the chief wishes to see you!"

Blood-clot accompanied the messenger to the middle of the village, where on the smooth-trodden ground the Bull and others were playing the wheel game. The chief invited the visitor to play against him, and the young man assented. With his mystery-power Blood-clot won at every cast, which so angered the monster that, glowering fiercely, he rushed at the youth with threatening horns. Transforming himself into a feather, the wonderful boy drifted to one side and settled to the ground, then resuming his natural form he shot the creature as it thundered past.

Knowing that other evils infested the world, he travelled on, following a trail that led through a dense forest, until he came upon a number of human skeletons. As he stood there looking down at them and pondering what had been their fate, one of the trees, as if in answer to his question, toppled toward him, but instantly he became a feather and again escaped harm. Then retransforming himself, he built a fire under the fallen tree, which was soon destroyed. Piling the remains of the unfortunate men together, Blood-clot built a sweat-lodge over them, calling four times to the dry bleached bones. At the fourth command they came out of the lodge, living beings once more. They begged him not to go farther, telling him that there were

many mysterious and dreadful things ahead of him, and prophesying misfortune.

Undaunted by their dire forebodings, he proceeded on his way. To his ear was borne the murmur of water rippling over a rocky bed. Pushing his way through the shrubbery, he came upon a brook, and there beside the stream sat a beautiful maiden, idly toying with the pebbles. In a voice as soft as the whisper of the trees, she told him of her father's cruelty, which had driven her to haunt the brookside to escape his wrath. "Marry me," said the youth, "and I will care for you." Her eye was pleased with the handsome stranger, and she led him to her father's lodge.

From the first Blood-clot was feared by his father-in-law, who determined to destroy him, and with that in his mind he sent the young man to cut arrow-shafts. When Blood-clot reached the cherry thicket a huge Bear sprang out at him, but his ability to become a feather once more saved him, and the animal was killed as had been the other monsters. With the Bear's claws and a bundle of cherry-shoots the wonder-worker returned to the lodge.

Disappointed by the failure of his plot, the evil father sent him to obtain feathers for the arrows, telling him of a tall tree in which there was an eagle's nest. As he climbed the tree, it grew higher and higher, until it seemed to touch the sky, and despairing of ever reaching the top, Blood-clot cried, "Let the tree remain as it is!" Thus he was able to reach the nest, and finding it to be that of Thunderbird, he asked the young birds, "How does your father come?"

"In a white cloud of hail," they replied.

Soon the white cloud appeared, lightning flashed, and Thunderbird settled on the nest. Perceiving the stranger, he challenged him to perform some wonder. The young man drew forth an arrow and shot it into a rock clear to the feathers, and said, "If you can pull the arrow out and not break it, it shall be yours; if you cannot, I will kill you!" Thunderbird grasped the end of the arrow in his beak and started to fly out with it; but it was elastic, and stretching to the highest point of tension it suddenly snapped back and crushed the bird's skull against the rock. Blood-clot took the feathers and gave them to the man in the lodge, who ill concealed his surprise and displeasure.

The next day he sent the young man after sinew for the arrows, telling him of a Bull that lived near a certain spring. Blood-clot found the place and saw a monster Buffalo pawing the ground and throwing

great lumps of earth into the air. This animal destroyed its victims by sucking them irresistibly within reach of his horns; but when Blood-clot felt himself drawn toward the monster's mouth, he became a feather, at which the creature lunged in vain. Then turning into a man, he shot the Bull and took the sinew back to his father-in-law.

This attempt having failed, the evil plotter told Blood-clot to go out and look for game. As he journeyed along the shore of a lake, a wave of water rushed toward him, and as it enveloped him a Water-monster swallowed the daring youth. Quickly he drew his knife and thrust it into the heart of the creature, which in its death struggles disgorged him and threw him far up on the land. The carcass soon floated to the shore, and, slashing it open, the destroyer first liberated the men imprisoned in its belly, then cutting the body into small bits, he threw them into the water, where they immediately became fish. Returning to the lodge the wonder-worker sought his father-in-law. "You have tried in many ways to kill me," he said. "Now I shall destroy you!" and he sent an arrow through his heart.

THE ADVENTURES OF SPIDER

Spider, being a restless fellow, could never stay in one place very long, but was continually making little excursions about the country. One day as he was walking down the river-bank, he saw a Bear on the opposite side, and wishing to have some fun with him, shouted across, "Ho, Bear!" The Bear raised himself and looked all around.

"How ridiculous you are!" called Spider. "Your eyes are small and squinty, and the hair is dark around them!"

At this, Bear became very angry, and splashing into the river he swam across to punish his tormentor; but the latter, fearing his wrath, ran away quickly. The infuriated animal pursued, and Spider, seeing him come on with bristling hair and open mouth, was much alarmed, and tried as he ran to think of a way to escape. As he was speeding along he came to a large pile of Stones, and stopping, said to them, "Brothers, let us make a sweat-lodge here."

The lodge appeared as he spoke, and some of the Stones piled themselves around the edge of the cover, while a few went inside. The jester entered, and soon the Bear came up looking very angry. Spider put his head out, and called to him:

"Brother, what is wrong? Whom are you chasing? I saw that imp Spider running by and tried to stop him, but he seemed to be in a hurry, and went on. No doubt he has been up to some mischief! Anyway, there is no use running yourself to death, and you had better take a sweat, for you might get sick, being so overheated. You go in first, while I stay outside and open the lodge for you when you have finished." The Bear agreed, and went in. Spider pulled the flap down, whispering to the Stones, "Brothers, sit on this flap and do not let him get out!"

In the meantime the Bear had been pouring water on the heated stones inside, and the steam was getting very hot, so that he soon had enough, and cried, "Brother, open the door!"

But Spider's only heed was to whisper to the Stones, "Hold fast, brothers! Don't let him out!" Swinging a club in his hand, Spider walked watchfully around the lodge, and every time the sweater's head showed against the cover he dealt him a blow, until at length the Bear was dead.

"Now I shall have a feast," chuckled Spider, and he began to skin his victim.

As he busily cut and slashed, Coyote joined him, and said, "Brother, give the entrails to me; I am very hungry!"

But the other answered impatiently, "Leave me alone! You are always interfering!"

The beggar persisted until at last he was told to take a portion of the entrails to the river and wash them, and for doing that he was to have something for himself. Coyote went to the river, but instead of washing the entrails, he ate them, and came back with a doleful story of how the Fish had snatched them from his paws. Spider gave him the rest, admonishing him to use more care, and as soon as Coyote was out of sight, he followed, for he suspected that he was being deceived. Creeping up to the bank he saw the thief devouring the tripe, and without a word he ran back to the camp, where he awaited the deceiver.

Soon Coyote appeared, whining, "The Fish robbed me again!"

But Spider, with a large stone in his hand, exclaimed, "Robbed you again, did they?" and knocked him down. After a while Coyote regained his senses, and his assailant, feeling remorseful, fed him and told him to go to their grandmother and borrow her cooking-pot. Coyote went out to a patch of brush, and shouted:

"Grandmother, we want to use your cooking-pot!" Soon the vessel came rolling down out of the bushes, and Spider commanded it to fill itself with water and sit on the fire, all of which the magic utensil did. Spider now finished cutting up the Bear, and placing the flesh in the receptacle, stirred up a hot fire. When the meat was cooked, he spread it out on the grass, and shouted:

"Spider is inviting everything that lives to come and eat with him!" and all the creatures came and swarmed around him. He told them to sit in rows, and seated himself on a nearby Stone with Coyote beside him. "I am going to eat first, and after that I shall feed all of you," the feast-giver explained. He started to get up to reach for the food, but he was stuck to his seat and could not move.

"Brother," he said to the Stone, "don't do that; don't hold me;" but it only answered, "No, I always stay in one place four years."

Not knowing that Coyote had told the Stone to play the trick, Spider appealed to him to move the meat closer, but when the other knew that Spider could not rise, he cried:

"All you animals seize the meat and eat it quickly! Our brother is stuck to his seat and cannot get away!"

The animals fell upon the food and soon it had disappeared, notwithstanding Spider's piteous pleading that a little should be left for him. Then mocking and laughing at him, they left him alone, and the Stone released him. Here and there at the edge of the fire he gathered up the little fragments they had overlooked, intending to make a meal from them, when a spark flew out and struck his bare belly, burning him so badly that he jumped back, spilling the scraps in the fire. This aggravated his ill-temper, and remembering the trick played upon him by the Stone, he called to the dry Sticks scattered around:

"Brothers, come into the fire!" They all came and threw themselves on it. The Stone viewed the preparations with alarm.

"Let me go!" he begged; but Spider only answered, "Let us see if you always remain in one place four years!" He placed it in the fire, sitting on it to hold it securely, and the Stone soon crumbled into pieces; Spider himself was somewhat scorched, but he did not mind that, having had his revenge.

"Brother," he said, "hereafter when any one puts you into fire, you will break." And this is the reason stones break in the fire.

On his travels Spider encountered a lake on whose surface swam a large flock of Ducks. He was hungry, and tried to devise a plan to

catch them. Stripping off his clothes he painted his body with white clay and cut his hair short, as if he were in mourning, and walked round and round the water's edge, crying. Whenever he came close to the waterfowl they would swim away, warning each other: "Look out for Spider! He is very wise; don't be deceived!" Wailing and tearing his hair, he walked about until the Ducks began to feel sorry for him, and swam up to the shore to inquire what was the matter.

"Alas! my brothers," said the trickster, "a war-party came and killed my wife and children. Join me in an expedition against the enemy." They agreed, and he told them to sit in rows that he might choose the bravest. Then passing along, Spider ran his hands over their bodies, and whenever he found one whose breast was fat, he would say, "Here is a brave man! Step over there, my friend," and the foolish fowl, flattered at being called brave, would obey. When he had selected all the fattest and sent the thin ones away, Spider said:

"Now we will dance before starting on the war-path. Keep your eyes shut while we are dancing, for anyone opening his eyes will be killed by the enemy. Stand in a circle and I will sing." Then passing behind them as he danced, he wrung their necks one by one, until Hell-diver, who had been watching, cried out: "Ducks, look out! Spider is killing you!" Squawking in terror, the survivors flew away. Spider paused in gathering up the dead fowl to turn to the Diver, who had stopped a short distance out in the lake.

"For this," he said "you shall hatch your young last of all the waterfowl and your home shall be the water."

Coyote, thin and lame, now appeared and stood watching the trickster as he picked and cleaned the birds.

"Brother, won't you give me the refuse?" he asked.

"Bring me a pot," answered Spider, "and you may have it all."

The beggar went away and returned, and very soon the vessel rolled to the spot and was told to take its place on the fire. Then Spider made a proposal:

"Brother, while the food is cooking I will race you around the lake and the winner shall have it all."

"You see that I am lame and cannot run" answered the other, "you ought to give me something anyway."

The jester insisted that he race with him, and Coyote finally consented, saying that he did it only to be agreeable. They started out and ran for some distance, when Spider, far in the lead, called back,

"Why don't you run? I thought you were racing with me!" Coyote rolled on the ground and stood up as well as ever, then swiftly passing the other he was back at the fire eating the fowl before Spider had run half-way around the lake.

"Brother, brother!" shouted Spider. "Leave some for me! But pretending not to hear, the winner of the race devoured the last morsel and was quickly out of sight. Spider came up to the fire and sat there pondering, saying to himself:

"I wonder why it is that I always get something good to eat and then never have a chance to eat it?" And shaking his head sadly, he walked homeward.

On one of his expeditions down the river Spider came to a fine pool in which were a number of pretty girls bathing.

"Come, and we will comb your hair," they called, and he, not unwilling, accepted the invitation, for he was very tired. They gathered about him, and under the soothing touch of their soft fingers in his hair, Spider began to doze; but as soon as he was sleeping soundly the maidens all became burdock burrs. The sleeper awoke shortly, and finding his hair matted and tangled with burrs he was in a quandary what to do. As it was impossible to pull them out, he was compelled in the end to cut his hair short. In this condition he started home, wondering what he would say to his wife in explanation of his plight. At last a good plan occurred to him, and as soon as he arrived in sight of the lodge he began to wail and weep loudly. The noise attracted the attention of the Spider woman, who came out to see what was the matter with her husband. When she saw him she was angry at the change in his looks, and exclaimed sharply:

"Fool, what are you crying about? Why have you cut your hair? What mischief have you been up to now?" Not a whit abashed, Spider answered:

"Is it you, my wife? I thought you were dead, because a little while ago I passed some men who told me that you had died in my absence. That is why I was mourning, and that is why I cut my hair!" Deceived and flattered at this evidence of her husband's affection, she took him into the lodge, where for many days he enjoyed the unusual sensation of a respite of her scolding.

Again in his wanderings Spider happened upon a fine pair of moccasins covered with porcupine-quill embroidery.

"I wish I could marry the woman who made those pretty moccasins,"

he said to himself. Regretfully he left them lying there, and went on. Soon he met a most beautiful maiden, who stopped him and inquired what he had said to the moccasins. Spider, for a time, denied having said anything, but she insisted that he had spoken, and he told her how he had expressed a wish to marry the woman who had made them.

"I made them," she said. "Come to my lodge."

Nothing loath, Spider accompanied her to a dwelling beautifully decorated with quills, and he congratulated himself on having a wife who could do such work. In the morning his new wife explained to him, "I never remain in one place more than a day." As she spoke, the lodge disappeared, and Spider found himself enveloped in a whirlwind, by which all that day he was buffeted and tumbled about. As the sun sank, the wind subsided, and there again stood the lodge with the beautiful woman inside. Dizzy and wretched, his clothing in tatters, he had no desire to dwell longer with the woman of the whirlwind, and he sought his own far-away home.

"The Atsina"
From
The North American Indian: Volume 5
by Edwards S. Curtis
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