GILMORE MELVIN RANDOLPH

PRAIRIE SMOKE, A COLLECTION OF LORE OF THE PRAIRIES

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Содержание

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MAP TO SHOW THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE NATIVE TRIBES IN WHAT IS NOW THE STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA AND ADJACENT STATES

The native tribes of North Dakota are of three different linguistic stocks or races. These are the Algonkian, Siouan and Caddoan. The Algonkian race is represented in North Dakota by one nation, the Chippewa or Ojibwa. The Siouan race is represented within our state boundaries by three nations, the Dakota (sometimes called Sioux), the Mandan, and the Hidatsa (who are also called Gros Ventre and Minnetari). The Caddoan race is represented by one nation, the Arikara. Other nations of the Caddoan race are the Pawnees, the Wichita and the Waco farther south.

The domain of the Dakota nation comprised southern Minnesota, northwest Iowa, almost all of South Dakota, part of northwest Nebraska, eastern Wyoming, and the southern part of North Dakota.

The Chippewa domain was around the west end of Lake Superior in northern Wisconsin, northern Minnesota, and part of northeastern North Dakota.

The Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras were three nations allied together for mutual protection against the encroachments of their common enemies who pressed upon them from all sides. The Mandan as an independent nation held domain along both sides of the Missouri River in what is now the central part of North Dakota. The Hidatsa were to the east of the Mandan. The Arikara were, some centuries ago, in northern Nebraska, but migrated gradually up the river. Finally they were so pressed by the incursion of the Dakotas from the east that they joined forces with the Mandans, who allowed them place in their country in exchange for the added strength which their numbers gave against the common enemy. The Hidatsas and the Mandans had already, before this, made alliance, so now the three nations were allied in the region of the upper Missouri River within what is now North Dakota, extending westward a little into what is now Montana.

The several domains of the various native tribes or nations within North Dakota and adjacent states are represented on this map as follows:

Dakota by horizontal lines,

Chippewa by vertical lines,

Mandan-Hidatsa-Arikara alliance by oblique cross-hatching,

Ponka by oblique lines slanting to the left,

Omaha by oblique lines slanting to the right,

Pawnee by horizontal and vertical cross-hatching,

Oto by cross-hatching of lines horizontal, oblique left and right.

DEDICATION

To the Real Pioneers of the Great Plains: to those whose questing spirit first sought out the wonders and the beauties of this land; – its vast reaches, league upon league, of grassland, verdant in springtime, sere and red and brown in autumn; its inviting valleys and its forbidding buttes; – to those whose moccasined feet made the first human footprints upon the turf of these prairies and upon the sands of these river margins; whose self-reliance made them the first to breast the current of these streams; whose humble footpaths over the land have now become the transcontinental highways of the world's travel and trade; to those who first slaked thirst at these cool, clear watersprings, whose hunger was first satisfied by the fruits of this land, and who, in eating and in drinking, devoutly gave thanks to our tender Mother Earth for her bounties, receiving them gratefully as sacred gifts to be prudently used and thankfully enjoyed, and never to be wasted; who knew and loved this land in all its spacious extent, east to west and south to north; who reverenced its sacred places, the holy watersprings, the grand and silent hills, the mysterious caves, the eery precipices, – all places where their fathers had with prayer and fasting sought and obtained the favour of the gods, and where the gods had granted revelations and given wisdom to their fathers; to those whose eyes first beheld this land in its virgin beauty, fresh and joyous, unscarred and unspoiled, clean and wholesome, animated with exuberance of life of many species of both plant and animal in wonderful balance and adjustment, spontaneously replenished; and who held it a form of sacrilege to violate or in any way endanger the overthrow of that delicate balance of nature; – to those first inhabitants of this land which we now inhabit.

That something of their appreciation, of their love and reverence for the land and its native life, something of their respect for its sacred places and holy associations; that something of their sense of its charm, of its beauty and wonder, may come to us; that we may the more worthily occupy and more sympathetically enjoy our tenure of this land.

To these ends and purposes this book is hopefully and earnestly dedicated.

INTRODUCTION

Many persons are ever seeking outside of themselves and in some distant place or time for interest and cheer. They are always discontented and complaining. They fancy if they were but in some other place or other circumstances they would be happy. But this is a vain fancy. Each of us carries with him the germs of happiness or of unhappiness. Those of unhappy disposition will be unhappy wherever they may be. Cheer is not in environment, but in the individual. One who is of a cheerful, understanding disposition will find interest and cheer wherever he may be.

Robert Louis Stevenson well said "The world is so full of a number of things I think we should all be as happy as kings." When there are so many interesting things in the world, so many in any given place, so many more than one can ever fully know or enjoy in the short span of human lifetime, how can one ever be overtaken by dullness? If dullness seem to enfold us, be sure it is we that are dull; it is because our minds are lazy and our eyes unseeing. There is enough of interest about us wherever we may be to engage our attention if we open our eyes to it. If we have initiative and independence of mind we shall find interest everywhere; but if we depend upon others or neglect what is about us in desire for what is distant we shall never be content. One greater than Robert Louis Stevenson said "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you."

It is with the purpose of calling attention to some of the many fascinatingly interesting things which we have all about us on the prairie plains and in the hills and valleys of our own state, and perhaps in our own neighborhood, that this volume is produced. The myths which pertain to the hills, valleys, springs and streams in our own state and in our own neighborhood must be of interest to us when we look with our own eyes upon the actual places to which these myths pertain. And these myths of the country in which we live are at least equal in beauty and interest to the myths of the Greeks, and to the old Teutonic myths of Thor, Odin, and Freya; or even to our own old British myths which we have from our Druidic ancestors. And however beautiful and interesting in itself a native tree or flower or other plant may be, however engaging to the attention may be a native bird or beast, how much more so when we think of what this bird or beast or flower or tree has been in the lives of generations of our fellow creatures who have lived here and loved this land and its teeming native life long before we ever saw it.

So, it is with the purpose of directing the attention of our people to the wealth of lore, of legend and story and myth, and of wonder and beauty which lies all about us here if we but look and listen, that this little volume is presented.

The title of this book is suggested by one of the popular names of the flower which is the subject of one of the stories of this volume. This flower, the earliest of all to bloom in springtime over all the northern prairies, has a number of popular names, among which are Pasque flower, Gosling flower, and Prairie Smoke flower. The latter name is suggested by the nebulous appearance presented by a patch of the bluish flowers blooming upon a prairie hillside in early spring, while all other vegetation is still brown and dead. At such a time, with all their blossoms tremulous in the spring wind, they appear to the view like a pulsing cloud of grayish-blue smoke hovering low over the ground.

Besides the reference to this dearly-loved prevernal flower the term "prairie smoke" also connotes a number of other engaging conceptions. To one who has lived upon the prairie this term will recall lively recollections of both sight and scent. It will recall to the imagination memories of rolling billows of smoke which he has seen covering miles of advancing lines of prairie fire; he will see again in memory the tiny blue spirals of smoke showing where some solid particles still smoulder hours after the line of fire has passed on leaving behind a vast blackened waste. It will recall to him also the rare, intangible blue haze which for days after such a fire lay like a veil over all the plain, and through which the sun appeared like a great red disk hanging in the sky, while the air was redolent with an indescribable tang. Again, it brings to mind the wisps of smoke which once curled upward

in the quiet summer air from stovepipes projecting from the roofs of prairie sodhouses, or which on snowy winter mornings hung above them like thin white scarfs against a vast background of blue overhanging a white world.

It will bring to mind also other days and other scenes of this same prairie country, when there might be seen wreaths of smoke issuing from the domes of the hemispherical-shaped houses of villages of Mandans, Pawnees, or Omahas, upon the hills and river terraces, their laboriously tilled cornfields and gardens in the fertile alluvial valleys near by. Or, again, it will recall the scene of an encampment of some of these people out upon the prairie on a buffalo hunt in quest of their meat supply. The encampment is a circle of conical tents, a circle of perhaps a half mile in diameter. Before each tent the evening fire is twinkling in the dusk upon the green of the prairie, a circle of friendly lights, each the centre of a family group, while a few stars begin to twinkle in the blue of the sky above, and the sunset colours glow in the horizon.

Some or all of these sights and scents, and others also, will present themselves according to the experience of the one who comprehends the title “Prairie Smoke.”

So it is hoped that to each one who reads this little volume it may indeed be as a “wisp of prairie smoke,” and shall bring a real savour of the prairie and at least a slight realisation of what the Prairie was before it was swept by the destructive Fires of Change.

Land and People

NATURE AND HEALTH

The philosophy of health and wholesomeness of the native Americans, the Indians, was to live in accordance with nature and by coming as much as possible into direct physical contact with the elements in nature, such as the sunshine, the rain and snow, the air and earth. They felt the need and desire to be in frequent and immediate contact with “Mother Earth,” to receive upon their persons the strong rays of the sun, the restorative efficacy of the winds from the clean sky, and to bathe daily in living streams.

The priest of a certain ritual of the Pawnee nation visited Washington. He admired the Washington monument as he viewed it from the capitol. When he went over to visit the monument he measured the dimensions of its base by pacing; then he stood up and gazed toward its summit, noting its height. Then he went inside; but when he was asked whether he would walk up the stairway or go on the lift, he said: “I will not go up. White men like to pile up stones, and they may go to the top of them; I will not. I have ascended the mountains made by Tirawa.” (Tirawa is the Pawnee name of God.)

Some years ago Mr. Louis J. Hill took a party of people of the Blackfoot tribe to New York City as his guests. They were interested in the sight of the great engineering feats as manifested in the great structures of the city. But they were unwilling to be cooped up in the rooms of the hotel, so they made arrangements to be allowed to set up their tents upon the hotel roof so that they might at least have the natural sunlight and the outdoor air.

In an ancient Pawnee ritual there is a hymn which begins with the words, “Now behold; hither comes the ray of our father Sun; it cometh over all the land, passeth in the lodge, us to touch and give us strength.” And in another stanza of this hymn, referring to the passing of the sun, it continues, “Now behold where has passed the ray of our father Sun; around the lodge the ray has passed and left its blessing there, touching us, each one of us.”

So it was ever the aim to live in accord with nature, to commune often with nature. A word of admonition from the wisdom lore of the Menomini tribe says, “Look often at the moon and the stars.” And the Winnebagoes have a wise saying: “Holy Mother Earth, the trees and all nature, are witnesses of your thoughts and deeds.” Another admonition of Winnebago wisdom is: “Reverence the Unseen Forces that are always near you and are always trying to lead you right.”

SPIRIT OF LIFE

In the following verses Dr. A. McG. Beede of Fort Yates, North Dakota, has translated a prayer he once heard uttered by an old man of the Dakota nation who had just come from bathing in the river and was standing upon a hill giving expression to his feeling of adoration:

Spirit of Life in things above
And lovelier in things below,
We pray to Thee, All-being-love,
Spontaneous in our hearts to grow.

Our Father Life, we live in Thee
And pray for glory which is Thine,
And by our living may we be
As Thou art in the Life divine.

The trees and flowers and watersprings
Are singing good old songs of mirth,
So may we sing while music brings
The good old joy o'er all the earth.

Spirit of Life, sing on, sing on;
Sing till our aching hearts find rest
And anxious fear is past and gone,
And like the rivers we are blest.

The earth is singing, hark the song;
The whispering breezes floating by,
The waterstreams gliding along,
Reflecting faces in the sky.

Spirit of Life, we worship Thee,
With waterstreams and trees and flowers;
So may our new-born spirits be
As Thou art, and Thy glory ours.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS NATIVE LIFE

People of European race resident in America, (Americans we call ourselves) have sentimental regard toward the plants and animals native to Europe, some of which, domesticated by our ancestors, we have brought with us to America. But most of our people have not developed such sentiments toward the plants and animals native to America. Literary allusions, songs and stories refer to trees, flowers, birds and other forms of life pertaining to our old home lands in Europe, but not to those of America. People of our race have been inhabitants of America now for three centuries, and still we have not made ourselves at home here; we have not formed sentimental attachment to the land and to its native forms of life.

It is a pity for a people not to be so attached to the country in which they live that their sentiments shall be first of all for the forms of life that are native to their own country. Otherwise there is a disharmony which lessens happiness and is harmful in many ways.

Lacking friendly feeling for the plants and animals native to America there has been a tendency to destroy these things in a ruthless manner; and this can hardly be prevented by law unless we can awaken sentimental feelings for the native forms of life in America such as that which our ancestors had for forms of life native in Europe.

Indians, the native Americans, have friendly sentiments, and even feelings of reverence for the forms of life native to America.

I once asked an old Omaha what was the feeling of Indians when they saw the white men wantonly killing buffaloes. As soon as he comprehended my question he dropped his head and was silent for a moment, seeming to be overcome by sadness; and then in a tone as though he were ashamed that such a thing could have been done by human beings, he answered: “It seemed to us a most wicked, awful thing.”

Most white men can not comprehend the sense of pain experienced by Indians at seeing the native forms of life in America ruthlessly and wantonly destroyed with no compunction on the part of the destroyers. And this destruction of the forms of native American life by white people gave to Indians a sense of a fearful void in nature, coupled with a feeling of grief, of horror, of distress and pain. It was not fundamentally the thought of the loss of their food supply, but the contemplation of the dislocation of the nice balance of nature, the destruction of world symmetry.

White Horse, an old man of the Omaha tribe in Nebraska, said to me in August, 1913: “When I was a youth the country was beautiful. Along the rivers were belts of timberland, where grew cottonwoods, maples, elms, oaks, hickory and walnut trees, and many other kinds. Also there were various vines and shrubs. And under all these grew many good herbs and beautiful flowering plants. On the prairie was the waving green grass and many other pleasant plants. In both the woodland and the prairie I could see the trails of many kinds of animals and hear the cheerful songs of birds. When I walked abroad I could see many forms of life, beautiful living creatures of many kinds which the Master of Life had placed here; and these were, after their manner walking, flying, leaping, running, feeding, playing all about. Now the face of all the land is changed and sad. The living creatures are gone. I see the land desolate, and I suffer unspeakable sadness. Sometimes I wake in the night and I feel as though I should suffocate from the pressure of this awful feeling of loneliness.”

Indians generally were shrewd and discerning observers of the life and habits of plants and animals. The careful study of plants and animals was a considerable part of the courses of study in their system of education, which included much more than is supposed by persons who have not made themselves acquainted with Indian life. They were well informed in plant and animal ecology, and in knowledge of range of species. They took cognizance of the habits of animals in the animals’ dwelling places. An old Indian once told me how a muskrat lays up stores of food in his house. He compared the appearance of the musk-rat’s stores to that of a grocer’s goods on the shelves of his

store. Many old Indians have told me what kinds of food are stored by different species of animals which lay up stores. They often speak of such animals as lay up food stores as being civilized animal nations, and of those which do not make such provision as being uncivilized.

They attribute great wisdom to certain species of animals. This disposition results from discerning observation of the animals' works and ways. The beaver notably is reputed to be very wise and industrious. Indians often sought to gain the favor and learn the wisdom of various animal species by endeavoring to place themselves en rapport with the guardian genius of the species.

INDIANS' APPRECIATION AND LOVE OF THEIR HOMELAND

In the rituals of the various tribes may be found numerous expressions of the love and reverence which the people had for Holy Mother Earth in general and for their own homeland in particular. And in their thought of their homeland they did not regard it as a possession which they owned, but they regarded themselves as possessed by their homeland, their country, and that they owed her love and service and reverence. The following song is found in an ancient ritual of the Pawnee nation which is given entire in the Twenty-second Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Part 2. This song plainly reflects the topography and the scenery of the country of the Pawnee nation, that part of the Great Plains traversed by the Solomon, Republican, Platte, Loup, and Niobrara rivers.

SONG TO THE TREES AND STREAMS

I

Dark against the sky yonder distant line
Lies before us. Trees we see, long the line of trees,
Bending, swaying in the breeze.

II

Bright with flashing light yonder distant line
Runs before us, swiftly runs, swift the river runs,
Winding, flowing o'er the land.

III

Hark! O hark! A sound, yonder distant sound
Comes to greet us, singing comes, soft the river's song,
Rippling gently 'neath the trees.

In the foregoing song one can hear the constant murmur of the summer south wind as it blows in that country for days, and see the broad stretch of the great level land, gently undulating in places, with its eastward-flowing streams bordered by zones of trees, the timbered zones along the stream courses being the only forest land in that country.

THRILLING ESCAPE OF A WAR PARTY OUTNUMBERED AND SURROUNDED BY THEIR ENEMIES

A Pawnee Story

In the northwest part of Nebraska there is a high butte with perpendicular sides like the walls of a great building. Because of the shape of this butte, and because it is composed mostly of a soft rock or hard, firm clay, it is called Court-House Rock by the white people. Of course it has other names among the Indian tribes of that region.

This great butte stands out boldly upon the high plain and can be seen for many miles in all directions overlooking the Platte River. The top is almost flat and all sides but one are almost vertical, and are bare of vegetation, worn smooth by rain and by wind, impossible to climb. But there is a way on one side by which a strong man can make his way to the top.

This high lonely butte stands on the borderland between the country of the Pawnees and the country of the Dakotas. The Dakotas and the Pawnees were almost always at war with each other. Many years ago a Pawnee war party was camped near this butte when they were surprised by a war party of Dakotas stronger in numbers than their own party. In the fight which ensued the Pawnees were unable to drive their enemies off, but were compelled to take refuge by climbing to the top of the butte. The Dakotas were unable to follow the Pawnees upon the butte, for the Pawnees were able to guard the single narrow path. But neither could the Pawnees escape again upon the open plain for the Dakotas securely guarded the descent and could easily kill one after another all who might attempt to come down that way. So it seemed only a question of time before all the Pawnees must die of hunger and thirst upon the top of the rock, or come down and give themselves up to death at the hands of their enemies. The camps of the Dakotas surrounded the butte, laying siege to it to starve the Pawnees out.

The Pawnees were in a woeful plight. As the sun rose and traveled across the sky they could look away for miles and perhaps see flocks of antelopes grazing upon the plain, while their own stomachs were pinched with hunger; and some miles to the south they could see the flashing sunlight gleaming upon the waters of the Platte River, while close at hand, at the foot of the butte, they could see their enemies eating and drinking, which could but serve to aggravate their own hunger and thirst. And at night when the scorching sun had sunk in the west they might look away to the eastward, in which direction their homes lay many days' march distant in the beautiful and fruitful valley of the Loup River; and as they looked the twinkling stars appearing one by one near the eastern horizon must have made them think of the evening camp fires of their home people. And at night the grim chill of the rare air of the high butte gripped their bodies in its clutch. And all the while they must be very vigilant against their enemies to prevent being overtaken. They all suffered severely, but the captain of the company suffered most of all; for added to the bodily sufferings which he endured in common with his men, he also suffered extreme mental anguish, for he felt his responsibility on account of his men. Because they had trusted his leadership and had put themselves under his orders it seemed that now they must all die a horrible death. For himself he dreaded not death so much as to be the cause of the loss of his brave men. To him this was far more bitter than death. In the night-time he would go away from the others and cry out in fervent prayer to Tirawa, begging His help, begging that He would show him some way to save his men and bring them off safe.

And while he was thus praying, he heard a voice saying, "Look carefully and see if you can find a place where you shall be able to climb down from this rock and save your men and yourself." So he prayed earnestly all night, and when daylight came he went along the edges of the butte looking

carefully to see if there might be a place where some way might be found by which to go down. At last he found a jutting point of rock near the cliff edge, and standing above the level. Below this point the cliff side was smooth and vertical. It occurred to him that this point might be made a means of support from which the men might let themselves down the face of the cliff by a rope. When night came again, after he had posted the sentries to guard the place of ascent from the enemy, he returned to the point of rock and with his knife he cut away soft weathered rock at its base to make a secure place of fastening for a rope. Then he gathered secretly all the lariats which the company had. These he tied together and then, tying one end securely to the rock which he had prepared, he carefully paid out the rope and found to his joy that it reached the ground below. He made a loop in the rope for his foot and then he let himself slowly down to the ground, then he climbed back again. When night came again he posted his sentries so that the enemy might see them at their posts on the side of the butte above the path, but when darkness had fully come they were all gradually withdrawn. Quietly calling his men about him he explained his plan and told them how they might all save themselves. He sent his men down by the rope, one after another, beginning with the youngest and least important of the company, and so on up to the men of most importance. Last of all the captain of the company himself came down. He and all his men crept quietly in the darkness through the Dakota lines and escaped safely. The Dakotas directed their vigilance mainly toward the other side of the butte where lay the only path, and that a very rugged one, between the base and the summit.

The Pawnees never knew how long the Dakotas kept watch about the rock.

A MANDAN MONUMENT IN COMMEMORATION OF AN ACT OF HEROISM

It is a common instinct among all nations of the human race to preserve relics and record memorials of notable persons and events. Such monuments vary with the different means and materials at hand. Sometimes mounds of earth, sometimes boulders, sometimes cairns of stones, sometimes hewn stones, and various other devices have been used according to circumstances.

There exists a monument to the memory of a Mandan hero which has never before been described and published. The following account is from information given by several persons of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara tribes. The location of the monument is near the site of "Fish-hook Village" on the north side of the Missouri River some twelve or fifteen miles east of Elbowoods, North Dakota.

During the middle part of the 19th century the three tribes, Arikara, Hidatsa and Mandan, lived together in alliance against their common enemies. Their chief enemies were the Dakota. So these three tribes built their three villages adjoining, making one compound village of three wards. The village lay upon a well-drained terrace of the Missouri River, while their farms were laid out in the fertile alluvial "bottom" along the river both above and below the village. To the north of the village site lies a range of hills.

The enemy many times made raids upon the village. They would approach under cover of the hills to the north and then steal close upon the village through the course of a ravine which skirted the northeast and north sides of the village.

About sixty-six years ago such an attack was made by a war party of Dakota. Of the defenders of the village, two young Mandans, brothers, named Lefthand and Redleaf, had been dismounted and their retreat cut off by the enemy. A brother of these two, Whitecrow by name, saw the danger of Lefthand and Redleaf and rode out to their assistance. Lefthand was killed and Redleaf was defending the body from a Dakota who was trying to take the scalp. Redleaf shot at the Dakota and missed him, the bullet going over the enemy's head and striking into the ground beyond him, the enemy being crouched low at the time of the shot. Whitecrow rode in a circuit beyond these combatants and held off the attacking party of the enemy. He killed the Dakota who was engaged in combat with his brother Redleaf. Then Whitecrow picked up Redleaf upon the horse with himself and carried him safely back to the village.

After the enemy had been driven away the Mandans went out and marked the course in which Whitecrow had ridden to his brother's rescue, the spot where Lefthand had been killed, the spot where Redleaf had made his stand, the spot where the Dakota was killed, and the spot where Redleaf's bullet fired at the Dakota, had struck the ground. The method used for marking these places was by removal of the sod leaving holes in the ground. To mark the course of Whitecrow's horse the sod was removed in horse-track shaped sections consecutively from the point of advance from the village round the place of combat and returning to the village. The horse-track marks were made about two feet in diameter. All these marks commemorating the entire action, which took place about the year 1853 are still plainly evident, being renewed whenever they tend to become obliterated by weathering and by advancing vegetation.

THE LEGEND OF STANDING ROCK

This story of Standing Rock is a legend of the Arikara who once had their villages along the Missouri River between the Grand River and the Cannonball River. Afterwards, being harrassed by hostile incursions of the Dakotas they abandoned this country to their enemies and moved farther up the Missouri River, joining themselves in alliance with the Mandans.

One time there was a young girl in this tribe who was beautiful and amiable but not given to heedless, chattering, idle amusement. She was thoughtful and earnest and conversant with the ways of all the living creatures, the birds and the small mammals, and the trees and shrubs and flowers of the woodlands and of the prairies. She was in the habit of going to walk by herself to visit and commune with all these living creatures. She understood them better than most other people did, and they all were her friends.

When she became of marriageable age she had many suitors, for she was beautiful and lovely in disposition. But to the young men who wooed her she answered, “I do not find it in my heart to marry any one. I am at home with the bird people, the four-footed people of the woods and prairies, with the people of the flower nations and the trees. I love to work in the cornfields in summer, and the sacred squash blossoms are my dear companions.”

Finally her grandmother reasoned with her and told her that it was her duty to marry and to rear children to maintain the strength of the tribe. Because of filial duty she finally said, when her grandmother continued to urge her to marry a certain young man of estimable worth who desired her for his wife, “Well grandmother, I will obey you, but I tell you that good will not come of it. I am not as others are, and Mother Nature did not intend me for marriage.”

So she was married and went to the house already prepared for her by her husband. But three days later she came back to her mother’s, house, appearing sad and downcast. She sat down without speaking. Finally her grandmother said, “What is it, my child? Is he not kind to you?” The girl answered, “Oh, no, he is not unkind. He treated me well.” And with that she sped away into the forest. Her grandmother followed her after a little while, thinking that out among her beloved trees and plants she might open her heart and tell her what was the trouble. And this she did, explaining all the trouble to her grandmother. And she concluded her talk with her grandmother with these words, saying: “And so you see, grandmother, it is as I said when you urged me to marry. I was not intended for marriage. And now my heart is so sad. I should not have married. My spirit is not suited to the bounds of ordinary human living, and my husband is not to be blamed. He is honorable and kind. But I must go away and be with the children of nature.” So her grandmother left her there where she was sitting by a clump of choke-cherries, having her sewing kit with her and her little dog by her side.

She did not return home that night, so the next morning young men were sent to search for her. At last she was found sitting upon a hill out upon the prairie, and she was turned to stone from her feet to her waist. The young men hastened back to the village and reported to the officers who had sent them out.

Then the people were summoned by the herald and they all went out to the place where the young woman was. Now they found she had become stone as far up as her breasts.

Then the priests opened the sacred bundle and took the sacred pipe which they filled and lighted and presented it to her lips so that thus she and they in turn smoking from the same pipe might be put in communion and accord with the spirit. But she refused the pipe, and said, “Though I refuse the pipe it is not from disloyalty or because of unwillingness to be at one with my people; but I am different by nature. And you shall know my good will towards my people and my love and remembrance of them always, for whoever in summer time places by this stone a wild flower or a twig of a living tree in winter time or any such token of living, wonderful Nature at any time, shall be glad in his heart, and shall have his desire to be in communion with the heart of Nature.” And as she said these words

she turned completely into stone, and her little dog, sitting at her feet and leaning close against her was also turned into stone with her. And this stone is still to be seen, and is revered by the people. It is from this stone that the country around Fort Yates, North Dakota, is called Standing Rock.

THE HOLY HILL PAHUK

Each of the nations and tribes of Indians had certain places within its own domain which they regarded as sacred, and to which they accordingly paid becoming reverence. These places were sometimes watersprings, sometimes peculiar hills, sometimes caves, sometimes rocky precipices, sometimes dark, wooded bluffs. Within the ancient domain of the Pawnee nation in Nebraska and northwest Kansas there is a cycle of five such sacred places. The chief one of these five mystic places is called Pahuk by the Pawnee. From its nature it is unique, being distinctly different from any other hill in all the Pawnee country. Pahuk stands in a bend of the Platte River where the stream flows from the west in a sweep abruptly turning toward the southeast. The head of the hill juts out into the course of the river like a promontory or headland, which is the literal meaning of the Pawnee word "pahuk." The north face of the bluff from the water's edge to the summit is heavily wooded. Among the timber are many cedar trees, so that in winter, when the deciduous trees are bare, the bluff is dark with the mass of evergreen cedar. The cedar is a sacred tree, so its presence adds mystery to the place. The Pawnee sometimes also speak of this hill as Nahura Waruksti, which means Sacred or Mysterious Animals. This allusion to the Sacred or Mysterious Animals has reference to the myth which pertains to this place.

All the other tribes throughout the Great Plains region also knew of the veneration in which this hill is held by the Pawnee, so they, too, pay it great respect, and many individuals of the other tribes have personally made pilgrimages to this holy place. The people of the Dakota nation call it Paha Wakan, "the Holy Hill."

The Pawnee speak of the animal world collectively as Nahurak. It was believed that the interrelations of all living beings, plants, animals and human beings, are essentially harmonious, and that all species take a wholesome interest in each other's welfare. It was believed also that under certain conditions ability was given to different orders of living creatures to communicate with men for man's good.

The before-mentioned five sacred places of the Pawnee country were Nahurak lodges. Within these mystic secret places the animals, Nahurak, held council. According to one version the names of the five Nahurak lodges are Pahuk, Nakiskat, Tsuraspako, Kitsawitsak, and Pahua. Pahuk is a bluff on the south side of the Platte River, a few miles west of the city of Fremont, Nebraska; Nakiskat, (Black trees) is an island in the Platte River near Central City, Nebraska, dark with cedar trees; Tsuraspako (Girl Hill) is a hill on the south side of the Platte River opposite Grand Island, Nebraska. It is called Girl Hill because it was customary when a buffalo surround was made in its vicinity for the young girls to stay upon this hill during the surround. The hill is said to be in the form of an earth-lodge, even to the extended vestibule. Kitsawitsak, which white people call Wakonda Springs, is not far from the Solomon River near Beloit, Kansas. The name Kitsawitsak means "Water on the bank." Pahua is said to be a spring near the Republican River in Nebraska. Of these five places Pahuk was chief, and the Nahurak councils of the other lodges acknowledged the superior authority of the council at Pahuk.

There are many stories of the wonderful powers resident in these sacred places. One of these tells of the restoration to life of a boy who had been killed. The story is that a certain man of the Skidi tribe of the Pawnee nation desired to gain the favour of Tirawa (Pawnee name of God). He thought that if he sacrificed something which he valued most highly that Tirawa might grant him some wonderful gift. There were so many things in the world which he did not understand, and which he wished very much to know. He hoped that Tirawa might grant him revelations, that he might know and understand many things which were hidden from the people. He strongly desired knowledge, and he thought that if he sacrificed his young son, who was dear to him, and the pride of his heart, that Tirawa might take pity on him and grant him his desire. He felt very sad to think of killing his son, and he meditated a long time upon the matter. Finally he was convinced in his own mind that Tirawa

would be pleased with his sacrifice, and that then the good gifts he desired would be given to him, and that many things now dark to his understanding would be made clear, and that he should have ability given him to do many things which were now beyond his power.

One day this man took his boy with him and walked out from the village as though on some errand. They walked to the Platte River. After they had gone a long distance from the village, as they were walking by the riverside, no other persons being near, the man drew out his knife and stabbed the boy so that he was quickly dead. The man then dropped the body of the dead boy over the bank. After a time he returned to the village, and went into his own lodge and sat down. After a while he asked his wife "Where is the boy?" She said "Why, he went out with you." The man said "I was out of the village, but the boy was not with me."

He went out and inquired of his neighbors, and then all through the village, but of course the boy could not be found. Then for some days a general search was made for the boy, but no trace of him was found. After this the family mourned for the lost boy. It was now time for the summer buffalo hunt, so in a few days the people set out for the buffalo grounds, and the father and mother of the boy also went.

After the boy's body was dropped into the river it was carried away down-stream by the current, sometimes being rolled along in shallow water at the edge of sandbars and again it would be turned over and over in the whirlpool of some deep hole in the channel, for the Platte River is a peculiar stream, having a swift current but a wide course with deep holes and many sandbars.

After a time the body floated down nearly to Pahuk. Two buzzards were sitting on the edge of a bluff, gazing over the water. So, sitting there, one of the buzzards stretched out his neck and looked up the river. He thought he saw something in the water floating down-stream. He stretched his neck again and looked, and turned to the other buzzard and said "I see a body." Then they both looked towards the object in the water, stretching out their necks and gazing intently. They saw that the object was the body of the boy. The first one said "What shall we do about this?" The second one said "Let us carry the body down to Pahuk, to the hill where Nahurak Waruksti is." So they both flew down to the floating body and got under it and lifted it upon their backs and carried it to the top of the bluff called Pahuk, over the secret cave of the Nahurak Waruksti, and there they placed it upon the ground. Then the two buzzards stood quietly gazing upon the body of the boy where they had laid it down upon the ground.

This cave far under the hill was the council lodge of the animals. There sat the councilmen of all kinds of animals and birds, great and small, which were native to that country. There were the buffalo, the beaver, elk, deer, antelope, otter, muskrat, wolf, bear, fox, wildcat, badger, bean mice, and many other kinds of animals. And there were the swan, the loon, goose, duck, wild turkey, prairie chicken, quail, heron, bittern, crane, plover, kildeer, meadowlark, blackbird, owls, hawks, swallows, crow, chickadee, woodpeckers, grackle, purple martin, and many other kinds of birds. There were also snakes, turtles, toads and frogs. These were the Nahurak people, the Nahurak Waruksti, the Sacred Animals. And the kingfisher was a messenger and errand man for the Nahurak council.

Now it happened when the buzzards brought the body of the young man and laid it down on the top of Pahuk, the kingfisher, who was flying about over the river on business for the Nahurak, was flying by. He stopped and looked at the body. He already knew all that had happened, and he was moved with compassion for the boy. So he flew down at once to the water at the foot of Pahuk and dived in at the entrance of the Nahurak lodge. He spoke to the assembly of the Nahurak and told them all that had happened and said in conclusion, "And the poor boy is up there on the hill. I hope you will have pity on him and will do what you can for him. I wish you would bring him to life again." When the kingfisher, the messenger, had finished speaking the Nahurak held serious council on the matter to decide what they should do. But after they had meditated long on the question, and each had spoken, they still could not decide the matter. The kingfisher urged the matter, asking for a favourable decision, saying, "Come, do take pity on him and restore him to life." But they could

not come to a decision. At last the chief of the council said, “No, messenger, we are unable to decide now. You must go to the other Nahurak lodges and find out what they have to say about it.” The kingfisher said “I go,” and flew swiftly out from the lodge and up the river to Nakiskat, the Nahurak lodge near Lone Tree. There he brought the matter before the council and pleaded for the boy as he had done at Pahuk, and told them that he was sent from Pahuk to ask the council at Nakiskat for their decision. So the Nahurak here at Nakiskat talked over the matter, but at last they said to the kingfisher “We are unable to decide. We leave it to the council at Pahuk.”

Then the kingfisher flew to the lodge at Tsuraspako, then to Kitsawitsak, and at last to Pahua, and at each place the Nahurak council considered the matter carefully and talked about it, but at each place the same answer was given. They all said “It is too much for us. We cannot decide what should be done. It is for the council at Pahuk to decide.”

After the messenger had visited all these lodges and had laid the matter before all of them, receiving from each the same answer, he flew as swiftly as he could back to the lodge at Pahuk and reported what the other lodges had said. They all recognized the council at Pahuk as the head council, and deferred the matter to them for decision. But it had already been once considered by this council, so the matter was now brought before the supreme council of Pahuk. This was a council of four chiefs of the Pahuk council who sat as judges to give final consideration and decision. These judges now reconsidered the matter, and finally, when they had talked it over, they said to the kingfisher, “Now, messenger, we will not decide this question, but will leave it to you. You shall make the decision.”

The kingfisher very quickly gave his decision. He said “It is my desire that this poor boy be restored to life. I hope you will all have pity on him and do what you can for him.”

Then all the Nahurak arose and went out from the council lodge and went up to the top of Pahuk where the body of the boy lay. They formed in order and stood around the boy and prayed to the Higher Powers, and at last the boy drew breath, then after a time he breathed again, then his breath began to be regular. Finally he opened his eyes and sat up and looked around in a confused manner. When he saw all the animals standing around him he was puzzled and bewildered. He said to himself, “Why, my father killed me by the riverside, but here I am in the midst of this multitude of animals. What does it mean?”

Then the head chief of the Nahurak council spoke to him kindly and reassured him. He was asked to rise and go with the animals into the council lodge. When all had gone in and were seated the four judges conferred together, then the chief of the four stood up and said, “My people, we have restored this boy to life, but he is poor and forlorn and needy. Let us do something for him. Let us teach him all we know, and impart to him our mysterious powers.” The Nahurak were all pleased at this proposal and manifested their approval.

Then the Nahurak showed hospitality and kind attention to the poor boy as their guest. He was shown a place to bathe and rest. When he had rested, food was brought to him. So he was entertained and treated kindly for the full season, and he was instructed by all the animals in turn and they taught him their secret arts of healing and imparted to him all their wonderful powers. So he remained with them at Pahuk till autumn.

Autumn is a beautiful season at Pahuk, and in all the region of the Platte, the Loup, the Republican, and the Solomon rivers in Nebraska and Kansas embraced by the cycle of the five Nahurak lodges. At that season in that country the sun casts a mellow golden light from the sky, while the land is emblazed with the brilliance of the sunflowers and goldenrod. And then the air is quiet and restful.

So one day at this season the Nahurak said to the boy, “It is now the time when the swallows, the blackbirds, the meadowlarks, and other kinds of birds will be gathering into flocks to fly away to the south-land for the winter. The beavers are cutting trees and saplings to store the branches under water for their winter food supply of bark; they are also gathering into their houses certain kinds of roots for food. The muskrats are repairing their houses and are storing in them the tubers of the

water-lilies and of the arrow-leaf and of other kinds of plants for their winter supply. In the edge of the timber, where the ground beans grow, the bean mice are making their store-houses and filling them with ground beans and artichokes. And your people have returned from the buffalo hunt with a good supply of dried meat and hides. They are now busy at home gathering and storing their crops of corn, of beans, and of squashes and pumpkins. We have this past summer instructed you in our arts of healing and other learning, and have imparted to you our mysterious powers, and have taught you about our ways of living. You are now competent to use for the good of your people the remedies and perform the mysteries which were given to us by Tirawa, and which we have now given to you. So you may now return to the village of your people. Go to the chiefs of the village and tell them what the Nahurak have done for you, and say to them that the people are to bring together gifts of dried buffalo meat and dried corn and dried choke-cherries, and other kinds of food; of robes and leggings and moccasins embroidered with porcupine quills; and of tobacco for incense. All these things the people are to send by you as gifts to the Nahurak at Pahuk in recognition of the favour which the Nahurak showed to you."

So the boy parted from his animal friends at Pahuk, and promised to return and visit them, and to bring them presents to show his thankfulness and the thankfulness of his people for what the animals had done for him. He traveled on up the Platte River and reached the village of his people in the night. He went to his father's house. He found his father and mother asleep and the fire had burned low. There was only a little light from the coals. He went to his mother's bed and touched her shoulder and spoke to her to waken her. He said "It is I. I have come back." When his mother saw him and heard his voice she was surprised, but she was glad-hearted to see her boy again. So she wakened the boy's father and told him the boy had come back. When the father saw the boy he thought it must be his ghost, and he was afraid. But the boy did not mention anything that had happened nor say where he had been. He said only "I have come back again."

The next day some of the people saw him, and they were surprised. They told their neighbors, and soon it was rumored all over the village that the boy had returned. They came where he was and stood around and looked at him and asked him questions, but he told them nothing. But he went to the chiefs of the village and made his report to them. Afterwards he gave account to the people, saying, "I have been away all summer with friends, with people who have been very good to me. Now I should like to take them a present of dried meat and other good things, so that we can have a feast. I beg you to help me, my friends." So they brought together a quantity of the articles required, and they chose some young men to go with him to help carry the gifts to the people who had befriended him.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.