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DAKOTA SUPERSTITIONS.

By G. H. Pond, of Bloomington.

BLOOMINGTON, December 14, 1866.

Rev. JOHN MATROCKS—*Dear Sir* :—I have deferred complying with your request to prepare a paper for the Historical Society till now, only because I have never found the leisure necessary to do it. Even now I have been obliged to let every thing else go except what was absolutely necessary to be done in order to attend to it. The press of to-day contains a notice of your meeting last Monday. I suppose, therefore, that I am too late, but will forward to you what I have prepared. If it is not acceptable please return it to me.

The "superstitions" to which the paper relates, it may seem to some, are too absurd to be the religion of men, however degraded, but they have been obtained from the Indians themselves, and I have never discovered that they had anything better, but have discovered much that is worse. I presume that no one will be disposed to say that it is my own invention, for that would be giving me credit for more imaginative and creative genius than I ever claimed. Such as it is I send it, and shall be satisfied if the society accepts it or returns it to me.

The sack I send you will find explained under the head "*Medicine-man a Doctor.*" It is not the medicine sack of the medicine dancer.

In haste, yours, &c.,

G. H. POND,

The Dakota Indians are the tribes who are generally known by the name of Sioux, a name given them by early French explorers.

Of the Dakota there are several—seven—grand divisions who are, by their orators, sometimes spoken of as "SEVEN FIRES."

These again were divided into a great number of smaller tribes or clans, each having its little chief, who was simply the most influential individual in the clan, which was composed chiefly of blood relations.

The chief, for generations, seems to have had but little authority except that which he derived from the support of some medicine-man, who attached himself to him, or from the fact, that government officers and traders transacted business with the clans through them.

The name Dakotah signifies much the same as confederacy. The word is often used as the opposite of enemy.

These divisions and subdivisions of Indians are all embraced under the comprehensive name DAKOTA, the name by which they call themselves. The Assinnaboines are said to have belonged originally to the Dakota family.

A few years ago, these Dakota tribes occupied the country along the Mississippi river, from about Prairie du Chien, to far above the Falls of St. Anthony, the whole of the Minnesota valley, and the immense plains extending westward to, and beyond the Missouri river.

The language of all these tribes is the same, with unimportant dialectic differences, and seems to be entirely distinct from that of the tribes around, except, perhaps, that of the Winnebago tribe.

Being one in language they are alike in their civil polity, if indeed it can be said that they have any, alike in their religious belief and practice, and alike in all their manners, allowing for the modifications which have been produced by diversity of circumstances.

It is to the superstitions of these Dakotas that the following paper relates.

In the first place it seems to be necessary to define the very significant Dakota word *wakan*, for, in it is contained the quintessence of their religion. It is an epitome of the whole, containing its pith and marrow.

The word *wakan*, signifies anything which is incomprehensible. The more incomprehensible the more *wakan*. The word is applied to anything, and everything, that is strange or mysterious. The general name for the gods in their dialect is this, *Taku-Wakan*, i. e., that which is *wakan*.

Whatever, therefore, is above the comprehension of a Dakota, is God. Consequently, he sees gods everywhere. Not Jehovah everywhere, but *Taku-Wakan*.

This is the starting point in their superstitions, but it is not with ease that one can arrive at the other end of the subject. It runs out like the division of matter, to divinity. To use an expression of one of their own most intelligent men, "there is nothing that they do not revere as God." *Wakan* is the one idea of divine essence. The chief, if not the only difference that they recognize to exist, among all the tens of thousands of their divinities, is the unessential one of a difference in the degree of their *wakan* qualities, or in the purposes for which they are *wakan*.

We speak of the *medicine-man*, *medicine-feast*, *medicine-dance*, and the *great-spirit* of the Indian, while he speaks of *wakan-man*, the *wakan-feast*, the *wakan-dance*, and the *great-wakan*.

Evidence is wanting to show that these people divide their *Taku-Wakan* into classes of good or evil. They are all simply *wakan*. The Dakotas have another word to represent spirit, or soul, or Jehovah, but the word *wakan* is never used in that sense, though a spirit might be *wakan*.

Evidence is also wanting to show that the Dakotas embraced

in their religious tenets, the idea of one Supreme Existence, whose existence is expressed by the term GREAT SPIRIT. If some of the clans, at the present time, entertain this idea, it seems highly probable that it has been imparted to them by individuals of European extraction. No reference to such a being is to be found in their feasts, or fasts, or sacrifices. Or if there is any such reference at the present time, it is clear that it is of recent origin and does not belong to their system. Individuals of them may tell us that the worship of the great medicine-dance is paid to the Great Spirit, but it is absolutely certain that it is not, as will be seen as we proceed.

Mr. Carver tells us of a religious ceremony of a very singular nature—very wakan—in which a person is carefully bound hand and foot and mysteriously released by the gods—the performance of which he witnessed, and which he said had reference to the GREAT SPIRIT. Doubtless it had such reference in his opinion, but it will be shown in another place, that in fact, it had not.

It is indeed true, that Dakotas do sometimes appeal to the Great Spirit when in counsel with white men, but it is because they suppose him to be the object of the white man's worship, or because they themselves have embraced the Christian doctrines. Still it is generally the *Interpreter* who makes the appeal to the Great Spirit, when the speaker really appealed to the *Taku-wakan*, and not to the wakan-*Tanku*.

Besides, the great struggle which at the present time exists between the heathen and the Christian Dakotas, is freely expressed to be a strife, between the old system of worship rendered to the *Taku Wakan*, and the new, which is rendered to the *Wanku Tanku*. The Christians are universally distinguished from the pagans, as being worshippers of Wakan Tanku, or as we speak, the Great Spirit.

One word more by way of introduction. It is true of all the Dakota gods, or wakens, that they are male and female, are subject to the same laws of propagation under which men and animals exist, and are mortal. They are not thought of as being eternal, except it may be by succession.

DAKOTA GODS.

THE ONKTEHI.

It seems to be proper to allow this wakan object to take the precedence in our arrangement, as he does really in respectability. The literal signification of the name is probably lost, though it may, perhaps, signify extraordinary vital energies.

In their external form, the Onktehi are said to resemble the ox, only that they are of immense proportions. This god has power to extend his horns and tail so as to reach the skies. These are the organs of his power. The dwelling place of the male is in the water, and the spirit of the female animates the earth. Hence, when the Dakota seems to be praying, chanting or offering sacrifices to the water or to the earth, it is to this family of the gods that the worship is rendered. They address the male as grandfather, and the female as grandmother. Hence, also, it is probably, that the bubbling springs of water are called the "breathing places of the wakan."

Though not the same in form, and though destitute of the trident, the horse, and the dolphin, yet, because he rules in the watery worlds as Neptune did in the Mediterranean sea, it may not be out of place to denominate him the Neptune of the Dakotas.

This god has power to issue from his body a wakan influence which is irresistible even by the superior gods. This missive influence is termed *tonwan*, which word will frequently recur as we proceed. This power is common to all the Taku-Wakan. This *tonwan* influence, it is claimed, is infused into each medicine-sack which is used in the medicine dance.

One of these gods, it is believed, dwells under the Falls of St. Anthony, in a den of awful dimensions, and which is constructed of iron.

A little to the left of the road leading from Fort Snelling to Minnehaha, in sight of the fort, is a hill which is used, at present, as a burial place. This hill is known to the Dakotas as "Taku wakan tipi," the dwelling place of the gods. It is believed that one of this family of divinities dwells there.

Not many years since, at the breaking up of the ice in the Mississippi river, it gorged and so obstructed the channel between the falls and Fort Snelling, that the water in a few hours rose very high. When the channel was opened by pressure, of course, the rush of

water "carried all before it." A cabin which stood on the low bank under the falls, was carried away with a soldier in it, who was never heard of afterwards. It is universally believed by the worshippers of the god in question, that the occurrence was caused by one of these gods passing down the river, who took the soldier for his evening meal, as they often feast on human spirits—*wicanagi*.

On the morning of July 4, 1851, at Traverse des Sioux, Robert Hopkins, a missionary of the American board to the Dakotas was drowned in the Minnesota river. It was the general belief and talk among the Dakotas, who were acquainted with the facts, that this god destroyed his life and ate his soul—*nagi*—because he had spoken against his worship in the medicine-dance.

It is related that as some Indians were once passing through Lake Pepin, they suddenly found themselves aground in the middle of the lake. Their god had risen to the surface, and they were lifted from the water on his back! Instantly they were enveloped in clouds, and a terrific tempest arose which chilled them with fear. Eagerly they offered their prayers and sacrifices to their venerable grand-father, when the wakan monster began "slowly to beat his drum the sound of which was the present thunder, while his eyes glistened like two moons. Soon the blows fell quicker and lighter, and the god chanted as follows:

Wakan de homni waye.
 Wakan de homni waye.
 Tipi de wankahe waye.
 Wakan de homni waye.
 Tipi de wankahe waye.
 Wakan de homni waye."

TRANSLATION.

I whirled this wakan.
 I whirled this wakan.
 I demolished this tent.
 I whirled this wakan.
 I demolished this tent.
 I whirled this wakan.

As the chant ceased, a calm succeeded, and one Indian with his wife, found himself safe and tranquil on the shore, but his companions had all perished. From that time he was a friend of this divinity, and was honored with the name of ONKTEHI-DUTA."

Another chant of this god, may, with propriety, have a place here, because it is often used in the medicine-dance, and indicates the character of the god in the estimation of his worshippers:

"Mde hdakinyan wakanyan munka.
Mde hdakinyan wakanyan munka.
He taku nagi knayan, niyake wata nunwe."

TRANSLATION.

I hie mysteriously across the lake.
I hie-mysteriously across the lake.
It is that decoying some soul, I may eat him alive.

The medicine-feast and the medicine-dance, have been received from this god, and the chants above are much used in both.

The sacrifices which are required by them, are the soft down of the swan rouged with vermilion, deer skins, tobacco, dogs, medicine-feasts and medicine-dances.

Their subordinates are the serpent, lizard, frog, ghosts, owl and eagle. These all obey their will. The Onktehi made the earth and men, and gave the Dakotas the medicine-sack, and also prescribed the manner in which some of those pigments must be applied, which are daubed over the bodies of his votaries in the medicine-dance, and on the warrior when he goes into action. They are believed to possess a wakan and an amuletic power.

Among all the myriads of the Dakota gods, there are none more respectable, or more respected, than the one above mentioned.

MEDICINE DANCE.

The wakan dance is represented as having been received from the family of gods above considered.

The onktehi, immediately after the production of the earth and men, to promote his own worship among them, gave to the Indians the medicine sack, and instituted the medicine dance. He ordained that the sack should consist of the skin of the otter, the raccoon, the weazel, the squirrel, the loon, one variety of fish, and of serpents. It was also ordained that the sack should contain four species of medicines, of wakan qualities, which should represent fowls, medicinal herbs, medicinal trees, and quadrupeds. The down of the female swan represents the first and may be seen at the time of the dance, inserted in the nose of the sack. Grass roots represent the second, bark from the root of trees the third, and hair from the back or head of a buffalo, the fourth. These are carefully preserved in the sack.

From this combination proceeds a wakan influence so powerful, that no human being, unassisted, can resist it.

At the institution of the dance, the god prepared a tent, four square, opening towards the east, with an extended court in front, and selecting four men for initiation, proceeded to instruct and prepare them for the reception of the mysteries. The rules of conduct which he gave them, were that "they should honor and revere the medicine sack, honor all who should belong to the dance, make frequent medicine feasts, refrain from theft, not listen to birds, (slander) and female members should not have a plurality of husbands." The sum of the good promised to the faithful, was "honor from the members of the institution, frequent invitations to the feast, abundance of fowl, with supernatural assistance to consume it, and long life here, with a red dish and spoon in the life to come."

The evils threatened against the unfaithful were as follows: "If unfaithful you cannot escape detection and punishment. If you enter the forest to hide yourself the black owl is there, if you descend into the earth serpents are there, if you flee into the air the eagle will pursue you, and if you go into the water there I am."

The candidates thus instructed and charged were placed in the center of the tent to receive the tonwan of the sack, discharged at them by the god himself. It is said that they perished under the operation.

After consulting with his goddess, the god holding up his left hand, and pattering on the back of it with the other, produced myriads of little shells, whose virtue is to restore life to those who have been slain by the tonwan of the sack. (Each of the members of the medicine dance is thought to have one of these shells in his body.) After taking this precaution, the god selected four other candidates and repeated the experiment of initiation with success, following the discharge from the sack immediately with the shell cast into the vital parts, at the same time chanting the following words:

"Najin wo, Najin wo,

Mitonwan katapi do.

Najin wo, najin wo.

Chorus.—Haya haya,

Haya haya."

TRANSLATION.

Rise on your feet, rise on your feet,

My tonwan is for sport,

Rise on your feet, rise on your feet.

Such, it is believed, was the origin of the medicine dance.

There are no officers, or superiority of rank, except that of age and experience, known in this pagan institution. The dance is celebrated; 1st, on account of the death of one of its members whose sack is given to a near relative of the deceased; 2nd, when a new sack is to be conferred on one who desires to become a member and who has proved himself worthy of the honor by making medicine feasts, and rendering due honor to the members, and 3rd, in the performance of a vow.

It is required of a candidate for admission, that he go through the ceremony of the "vapor bath" once each day, four days in succession. In the meantime some of the aged members instruct him in the mysteries of the institution, in imitation of the course of its author as already related. Besides, he is provided with a dish and spoon both of wood. On the side of the dish is often carved the head of some voracious animal, in which resides the spirit of the IYA—the god of gluttony. The dish will contain eight to ten quarts, or more, and is always carried by its owner to the medicine feast, and he is bound to eat all that is put in it, or pay a fine to the maker of the feast. A woman came to the writer on one occasion to ask for calico to make a short gown. She said she had lately had seven new ones, but had lost them all at medicine feasts, where she was unable to empty her dish. GREY IRON, of the *Black Dog* band, used to possess a dish on which was carved a bear entire, indicating that he could eat as much as a bear. The candidate is also instructed in the matter of painting his body for the dance. This paint is nearly all the covering that he wears on the occasion. He must always paint in the same manner for the ceremony of the dance. There is said to be wakan virtue in this paint, and the manner of its application, and those who have not been furnished with a better, by a war prophet, wear it into battle.

The candidate being thus prepared, and having made the requisite offerings for the benefit of the institution, on the evening of the day which precedes the dance, is taken in charge by ten or more of the more substantial brothers, who pass the night in devotional exercises, such as chanting, dancing, exhorting, eating, and smoking. Early in the morning the tent, in form like that which the god first erected for the purposes, is thrown open for the dance. The mem-

bers assemble painted and ornamented, each bringing his medicine-sack.

After a few preliminary ceremonies, appropriate to the occasion, including a row of kettles of large dimensions, well filled and arranged over a fire at the entrance of the court, guarded by sentries appointed for the occasion, the candidate takes his place on a pile of blankets which he and his friends have contributed. He is naked, except the breech cloth and moccasins, and well smeared with pigments of various hues. Behind him stands an aged and reliable member. Now, the master of the ceremonies, with the joints of his knees and hips considerably bent, advances with an unsteady, uncouth hitching, sack in hand, wearing an aspect of desperate energy, and uttering his "Heen, heen, heen," with frightful emphasis, while all around are enthusiastic demonstrations of all kinds of wild passions. At this point the sack is raised near a painted spot on the breast of the candidate, at which the tonwan is discharged. At the instant the brother from behind gives him a push and he falls dead, and is covered with blankets.

Now the frenzied dancers gather around, and in the midst of bewildering and indescribable noises, chant the words uttered by the god at the institution of the ceremony, as already recorded. Then the master throws off the covering, and chewing a piece of the bone of the Onktehi, spirts it over him, and he begins to show signs of returning life. Then as the master pats energetically upon the breast of the initiated person, he, convulsed, strangling, struggling and agonizing, heaves up the shell which falls from his mouth on a sack placed in readiness to receive it. Life is restored and entrance is effected into the awful mysteries. He belongs henceforth to the medicine-dance, and has a right to enjoy the medicine feast. Now comes the season of joy. The novice takes the wakan shell in his hand, and in the midst of savage demonstrations of the wildest kind, exhibits it to all the members, and to the wondering by-standers who throng the enclosure outside. The dance continues interspersed with "shooting each other," rests, smoking, eating and drinking, till they have jumped to the music of four sets of singers

The following chants, which are used in this dance, will sufficiently evince its character and tendency, and the character of its members,

especially when it is considered that this is the RELIGION OF IMMORTAL BEINGS—men and women.

“Waduta ohna micage.

“Waduta ohna micage.

“Minizata, ite wakan, maqu—Tunkan sidan.”

TRANSLATION.

He created it for me enclosed in red down

He created it for me enclosed in red down.

He in the water, with mysterious aspect, gave it to me—my grandfather.

Here is another of like significance :

“Tunkansidan pejihuta wakan micage.

He wicake.

“Minizate oicage wakan kin maqu ze.

“Tunkansidan ite kin zuwinta wo.

“Wahutopa zuha, ite zuwinta wo”

TRANSLATION.

My grandfather created for me mysterious medicine.

That is true.

The mysterious being in the water gave it to me.

Stretch out your hand before the face of my grandfather

Having a quadruped, stretch out your hand to him.

The celebration of the medicine-dance, is the extraordinary part of a system of Dakota superstition, of which the medicine-feast is the ordinary and every day part. A very large portion of the adults belong to this fraternity.

THE WAKINYAN.

This name signifies “*flyer*,” from *kinyan*, to fly. Lightning emanates from this *flyer*, and the thunder is the sound of his voice. This is the universal belief.

The existence of thunder is a matter of fact, apparent to all people. It must be explained and accounted for by the savage as well as by the sage, and by the first with as much confidence as by the latter, and more ; for he who is not supported in his tenets by reason, must of necessity be confident or fail. He must evince seven times as much confidence as one who has the support of reason, which the wise man observed to be the case in his day. The Indian has no more doubt, apparently, of the correctness of his religious tenets, than he has that a hungry man wants to eat. He is as confident of the correctness of his theory, in relation to the thunder, as we are that it is caused by the passing of electricity from one cloud to another.

The lightning, which is so terrible in its effects to destroy life, or to shiver the oak to atoms, is to the Dakota simply the tonwan of a winged monster, who lives and flies through the heavens shielded by thick clouds from mortal vision.

By some of the wakan-men, it is said that there are four varieties of the form of their external manifestation. In essence, however, they are but one.

One of the varieties is black, with a long beak, and has four joints in his wing. Another is yellow, without any beak at all, with wings like the first, only that he has but six quills in each wing. The third is of scarlet color, and remarkable, chiefly, for having eight joints in each of its enormous pinions. The fourth is blue and globular in form, and is destitute both of eyes and ears. Immediately over where the eyes should be, is a semi-circular line of lightning resembling an inverted half-moon, from beneath which project downward two chains of lightning, zigzaging and diverging from each other as they descend. Two plumes, like soft down, coming out near the roots of the descending chains of lightning serve for wings.

These thunderers, of course, are of terrific proportions. They created the wild rice and a variety of prairie grass, the seed of which bears some resemblance to that of the rice.

At the western extremity of the earth, which is presumed to be a circular plain surrounded by water, is a high mountain, on the summit of which is a beautiful mound. On this mound is the palace of this family of gods. The palace opens towards each of the four cardinal points, and at each doorway is stationed a watcher. A butterfly stands at the east entrance, a bear at the west, a reindeer at the north, and a beaver at the south. Except the head, each of these wakan sentries is enveloped with scarlet down of the most exquisite softness and beauty. (Indians are great admirers of scarlet, and to induce a child to take some nauseous drug, the mother has but to assure it that it is red.)

The Wakinyan gods are represented as ruthless, cruel and destructive in their disposition, and ever exert their powers for the gratification of this, their ruling propensity, at the expense of whatever may come in their way. They are ever on the "war path," and are "sharp shooters."

Once for all, it may be here stated, that a mortal hatred exists be-

tween the different families of the gods, like that which exists between Indians of different tribes and languages. The two families already mentioned, like the Dakota and the Chippewa, are always in mortal strife. Neither has power to resist the tonwan of the other, if it strikes him. Their attacks are never open, and neither is safe, except as he eludes the vigilance of the other. The fossil remains of the mastodon are confidently believed to be the bones of the Onktehi which have been killed by the Wakinyan. These relics of the gods are carefully preserved and held in awful esteem, for their wakan virtues. The Wakinyan, in his turn, is often surprised and killed by the Onktehi. Many stories are told of the mortal combats of these divinities. The writer listened to the relation, by an eye witness, of a story in substance as follows: "A Wakinyan god was killed, and fell on the bank of the Blue Earth river, which was twenty-five or thirty yards between the tips of the wings."

From the Wakinyan god, the Dakotas have received their war implements, (spear and tomahawk,) and many of those pigments, which, if properly applied will shield them from the weapons of their enemies. Dressed in these pigments, they feel as secure as did the fabled Greek, protected by the vulcanian shield.

It almost seems as if it were becoming to offer an apology before proceeding, but it is ventured to presume on the good nature of the reader and introduce

THE TAKU SKAN SKAN.

The signification of the term is, *that which stirs*. This god is too subtle in essence to be perceived by the human senses, and is as subtle in his disposition as in his being. Though invisible, he is ubiquitous. He is supposed to have a controlling influence over intellect, instinct and passion. His symbol is the boulder; and, hence, boulders are universally worshipped by the Dakotas. He lives, also, in what is termed "the four winds," and the consecrated spear and tomahawk are animated by his spirit. He is much gratified to see men in trouble, and is particularly glad when they die in battle or otherwise.

He can rob a man of the use of his rational faculties, and inspire a beast with intelligence, so that the hunter, like an idiot, will wander and become bewildered on the prairie or in the forest, and the

game on which he hoped to feast his family at night, escapes with perfect ease. Or, if he please, he may reverse his influence, and the animal has not even brutal instinct to escape from its pursuer.

This god is passionate and capricious to the highest degree; and, hence, it is very difficult to retain his favor. Often he is likened to a passionate, whimsical child, taking offence at everything, while it is as necessary to secure his favor, on the part of the hunter or the warrior, as it is to procure food, or to prove one's manhood by taking a scalp. Subordinate to this god are the buzzard, the raven, the fox, the wolf, and other animals of a similar nature. To him belong the "armor feast" and the "vapor bath."

The "armor feast" is of ordinary occurrence when the provisions are of sufficient abundance to support it, in which the warriors assemble and exhibit the sacred implements of war, to which they burn incense around the smoking sacrifice.

THE HEYOKA.

This god is so curiously wakan that he is entitled to a brief notice.

Like the Wakinyan, there are four varieties of them, all of which assume, in substance, the human form, but it would be unnecessarily tedious to note the differences of form, especially as the differences are unimportant.

These objects of superstition, are said to be armed with the bow and arrows, and with the deer-hoof rattle, which things are charged with electricity. One of the varieties carries a drum, which is also charged with the same fluid. For a drumstick, he holds a small Wakinyan god by the tail, striking on the drum with the beak of the god. This would seem to us to be an unfortunate position for a god to be in, but it must be remembered that it is wakan, and the more absurd a thing is the more wakan.

One of these gods, in some respects, answers to the wreathed zephyr of Grecian mythology. It is the gentle whirlwind which is sometimes visible in the delicate waving of the tall grass of the prairie.

By virtue of their medicine and tonwan powers, they render aid to such men as revere them, in the chase, in inflicting and healing diseases, and especially in the gratification of their libidinous passions.

That feast, in the observance of which the worshippers dip their hands into the boiling kettle and lifting the water in their hands, throw it over each other's naked bodies with impunity, belongs to this god.

The nature of the Heyoka is not simply supernatural, it is the opposite of nature.

He expresses joys by sighs and groans, and by assuming a most doleful aspect, and sorrow and pain by opposite sounds and aspect. Heat causes their flesh to shiver, and their teeth to chatter, while cold makes them perspire and pant. It is said of them, that in the coldest weather of the Minnesota winter, when mercury congeals, they seek some prominence on the prairie, where they put up some bushes to shelter them from the rays of the sun, under which they sit naked and fan themselves as they swelter with heat, and in the oppressive heat of summer they fold around them robe on robe, and lean over a rousing fire, sniveling and shaking with cold like one in a fit of the ague.

They feel perfect assurance when beset with dangers, and quake with terror when safe. With them falsehood and truth are reversed, good is their evil and evil their good.

Years ago at Lac qui-parle, the mother of the tall, "curly-haired chief," UPIZAHDEYA, was informed that it was required of her to make a feast to the Heyoka. She was so much opposed by some of her friends that she failed to comply with the wakan mandate, but she assured her friends, that as a penalty, they would be mortified by seeing her flesh become black, and her head bald, which came true. By degrees her flesh did become very dark, and her head bald, but to an intelligent observer, it was abundantly evident, that instead of being an infliction of the offended god, it was the result of neglecting to wash, even her face, for several years, and pulling out her own hair by little and little.

THE SUN.

As the sun is visible to all men, and as it has been an object of superstitious regard on the part of almost all pagan nations of past generations, it will not be thought worth while, perhaps, to mention the fact that the Dakota too, worships the sun. It will not, however, be quite out of place to put on record a few facts in relation to this part of Dakota worship, by which they presume to honor this

glorious object; facts which evince the sentiments of the deluded worshippers. The following, from the pen of Rev. S. R. Riggs, is to the point.

DAKOTA SUN DANCE.

The Sun is, from many circumstances, a natural object of worship among the unenlightened nations of men. With the Dakotas, the sun is sometimes appealed to as a witness. Sometimes they pray to it, generally with the honorable title of *Hunkayapi*. Sometimes, as a god, it communicates with men in dreams and visions. But the nature of the communication is that the men should dance the *wiwan-yagwacipi*, with the promise of success in hunting or war. Generally the object of dancing to the sun is to secure victory over enemies. In this aspect it is a *waihdusna* or *self-immolation* to the sun; it is an offering up of one's strength and manhood to secure the aid of the sun in the day of battle. The Bible says, "the stars in their courses fought."

There are occasions, also, when a man dances the sun dance as a thank-offering. He is sick and apprehends he will die. He makes a vow that if his life is spared he will dance to the sun. Or, he is on the war path and he prays to the great *hunkayapi* for success, promising in that event to dance to his honor. These are said to be the occasions and reasons for the *Wiwanyag-wacipi*.

More than a quarter of a century has passed since I witnessed this ceremony, and I was there only a couple of hours about the middle of the day. On the north side a couple of tents, fastened together, were stretched around poles, forming a large semicircle. In the focus of the radii stood three dancers, with their eyes turned towards the sun, which was then in the south. Their faces and the upper part of their bodies were gaily painted, and their heads were adorned with feathers. A blue or red blanket was strapped around their waist, and hung down like a woman's skirt. Each one had a rife made of the bone of a swan's wing, on which they kept up a toot-toot-tooting, varied by the measures of the dance and the song. Behind them in the shadow of the tent sat the singers and players on instruments—the drums and rattles. A few women sat still farther back, who formed a part of the choir, and joined in the chorus.

The chief dancer on this occasion, if I remember rightly, was Ma-

hipiya sua, who afterwards shot himself. The dancers always make incisions in their flesh, in which they insert swan's down or horse hair. These incisions are commonly made on the shoulders and arms. When the sacrifice is intended to be as complete as possible, an incision is made in the back, through which a cord of horse hair is passed, and a buffalo head is attached to the lower end, so that every time the body moves up and down, a slight motion is given to the buffalo head which lies on the ground behind him. At the close, if his strength remains sufficient, he drags the buffalo head around the place.

Occasionally a man inflicts still more torture on himself than this. He makes an incision in his breast, and passing a cord through it he draws it tight and fastens the other end to a pole which stands immediately in front of him.

The ceremonies of the sun dance commence in the evening. I have been under the impression that the time of the full moon was selected, but I am now informed that it is not essential. The singers and players on instruments practice their songs in the night, and there is some dancing. There is also feasting. Before morning the company generally lie down and sleep awhile.

The real dance commences when the *Hunkayapi* makes his appearance. Then the dancers begin and continue without *eating, drinking, or resting*, until nature is quite exhausted. Some join in the dance as particular friends of the dancer. They may occasionally sit down and smoke, but if the maker of the dance falls down or is observed to be quite exhausted, a friend may step forward and make a valuable present to some one. In this case the dancer may rest awhile and begin again. Some give out entirely before the sun goes down, when the dance is concluded. Others are able to continue into the night.

A man who dances to the sun is expected to make a song of his own, which embodies the *god-communication* to him.

SUN DANCE SONGS.

MAHIPIYA SUA'S SONG.

1. Hena yuha hibu e :
Nazi topa hena yuha oecetiwaya nunwe

TRANSLATION.

*Having these I come ;
Having these four souls may I make my camp fires."*

He was to take *four scalps* in battle.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2. 'Anpetu kin wamiconga,
Makatakiya u we | "The day that is determined for me,
May it come earthward." |
| 3. Minagi topa ye do,
Hoksidan wakan cicu e do. | |
| 4. Wiwanyake toki da he;
Nitakoda wanyaka ye. | "Wiwanyaki (a bird) where have you gone
Behold your friend." |
| 5. Anpetu kin wanniyag hi nanwe.
"May the day come to see thee." | |
| 6. Wacinhe wakanyan
Taninyan wahinawape. | With a crown of glory,
I come forth. |

This is the language of the sun as it rises in glory.

7. Mahipiya sua, kode,
Mini yain hwo.

This is sung by the singers when the man is almost dying of thirst. The brave man pays no attention to it.

The following is from the pen of Major General Curtis, dated Fort Sully, June 2, 1866 :

"The whole of the three thousand Sioux camped about us gave me early information of their design to have the annual sun dance at this time and place, the season of the year—the trees in full leaf—having now arrived, and they wished me to inform Colonel Recor, the commander of the soldiers, that however boisterous their demonstrations might be, they would all be peaceable and of a pious character.

On yesterday, June 1, the dancing was delayed at intervals to allow tortures to be inflicted. Two or three men stood over the devotee with needle and knife, very quietly performing penance, according to the customs of all these sacerdotal rites, as follows; First, they cut the arms in several places by striking an awl in the skin, raising it and cutting out about half an inch; this is done on both arms, and sometimes on the breast and back. Then wooden setons (sticks about the thickness of a common lead pencil) are inserted through a hole in the skin and flesh. Then cords or ropes are attached to these sticks by one end, and to the pole at the other end, the victim pulling on the ropes till the seton sticks tear out the flesh and skin. I saw one with two setons thus attached to his breast, pulling till it seemed to draw the skin out three inches, and finally requiring nearly his whole might to tear out the seton.

One, painted black, had four ropes attached at once. The pulling out is done in the dance, the pulling carried on in the time of the music by jerk, jerk, jerk, and the eye, head, and front all facing the sun in the form of supplication. One had four setons attached to four dry buffalo head bones. These were all strung and suspended to his flesh by ropes that raised each head some three feet off the ground. He danced hard to tear them out, but they would not break the skin. One came off the stick accidentally, but it was again fastened. Finally, these heavy weights (each

at least twenty-five pounds weight,) not tearing out by their own weight or motion, the devotee gave a comrade a horse to take hold of the rope and tear out the setons. While these were being thus tortured, their female relations came in and had pieces cut out of their arms to show their appreciation of the valor and devotion of their kinsmen. Still, as soon as the victim could be prepared, the music was renewed, and the dismal dance went on, victims' bodies now mingled with blood, pain, and setons.

There being several steamboats and many soldiers here, a crowd of spectators rather embarrassed the performers, so they concluded the performance at twelve o'clock, having only danced twenty-four hours instead of forty-eight, as they usually do. All the devotees gave away all their ponies and other valuables to their friends, had their wounds carefully dressed by attendant medical men, and sat down to an abundant feast of dog soup and buffalo meat.

So ended this most barbarous and painful exhibition of savage idolatry. The picture is still deeply impressed on my senses, but I cannot give half the horror of the scene, either by pen or pencil."

The object of these rites is to obtain the favor of the god to whom they relate.

In these divinities which have been mentioned, and innumerable others like them, as various as the wildest imaginations, maddened by passion, can create, or their circumstances and felt wants demand, the Dakotas find all that they desire of a religious nature. These divinities communicate with mortals through the medium of

THE MEDICINE-MAN.

These men are the representatives of the gods on earth, to men. They *are* the gods in human form, though in diminished proportions. They are essentially different from other men—wakan.

The original essence of these men and women, for they appear under both sexes, first wakes into existence floating in ether. As the winged seed of the thistle, or of the cottonwood, floats on the air, so they are gently wafted by the "four winds"—"Taku-skanskan"—through the regions of space, until, in due time, they find themselves in the abode of some one of the families of the superior gods, by whom they are received into intimate fellowship. There the embryotic medicine-man remains till he becomes familiar with the characters, abilities, desires, caprices, and employments of the gods. He becomes essentially assimilated to them, imbibing their spirit, and becoming acquainted with all the chants, feasts, fasts, dances and sacrificial rites which it is deemed necessary to impose on men.

Some of the more favored of these men are privileged to pass through a succession of such inspirations, with various families of the divinities, until they are completely *wakanized*, and prepared for human incarnation.

In particular, they are invested with the irresistible powers of the gods to do good or evil, with their knowledge and cunning, and their everywhere present influence over mind, instinct and passion. They are instructed how to inflict diseases and to heal them, to discover things concealed from common men, to foretell future events, to manufacture implements of war, and infuse into them the missive virtue—the *tonwan*—of the gods, and to perform all sorts of wonders.

Thus qualified for his mission, this germ of *wakan*, to become incarnate, is again committed to the direction of the “four winds.” From his elevated position, he selects a place which is to be the scene of his service, and enters the body of an unborn infant. Thus he effects an entrance into the world and into the sympathies of mortals.

When one of them dies, he returns to the abode of his gods, where he receives a new inspiration and a new commission, to serve a new generation of men in some other portion of the world. In this manner he passes through four inspirations and incarnations, and then returns to his primitive nothingness. These characters, however, do not always appear in human form, but enter the bodies of beasts, as the wolf, the bear, and the buffalo.

To establish their claims to inspiration, these characters must, of course, perform things that are *wakan*, in a manner to satisfy those on whom they purpose to impose their superstitions.

For this purpose, they artfully lay hold of all that is strange and mysterious, and if possible turn it to their own advantage. To do this is the one object and effort of their lives. It is their study day and night, at all times and on all occasions. They think about it when awake, and dream about it when asleep. They make use of all the means in their power, and their zeal never grows cold.

They assume familiarity with whatever astonishes other people, with a degree of self complacency, and an air of impudence and assurance which strikes the observers with amazement. They foretell future events with a degree of accuracy or of ambiguity which is sufficient for their purpose. Those at one village affect to be familiar with what is transpiring at another village leagues distant

They predict the result of a war expedition as if they had already been there ; and if the prediction is not fulfilled they find no difficulty in setting the failure to the account of the sins of their followers.

They inflict diseases and heal them. They kill and make alive. When occasion requires they seem to calm the tempest, or to raise the storm, and converse with thunder and lightning, as with a familiar friend and equal. In their devotional exercises, at times, they wrangle with the gods, charge them with duplicity, and are defiant. If one of them is killed by the electric fluid, which sometimes happens, it only proves the truth, to the living, of all he had taught them concerning the Wakinyan, and that he had provoked their anger by his sins.

The medicine man is not only familiar with the superior gods who are out of him, but he also has inferior gods dwelling in him, to satisfy whose cravings he frequently, and in the most public manner, tears off with his teeth and eats the raw, quivering, bleeding flesh of newly-slaughtered animals, like a starving beast or bird of prey, devouring parts of dogs or fish entire, not excepting bones and scales.

RAW FISH FEAST.

In the summer of 1852, a feast of this kind was observed at Shakopee. It was made by *Anoginajin*, second chief of the Little Six band and others.

After two days spent in introductory ceremonies, including "vapor bath" and "armor-feast," a tent was prepared opening towards the east, with a spacious court in front constructed of bushes. Within the court each of those who were to participate, had a bush set in which was prepared a nest. Two pikes, each about one foot long, rouged with vermilion and ornamented with down from the swan, were placed on some branches of trees in the enclosure. The fishes were entire as they had been taken from the water. Near the fishes were placed dishes of birch bark filled with sweetened water. The implements of war, belonging to the participants, were solemnly exhibited in the tent. The dancers, who were naked, except the breech cloth and moccasins, were fantastically smeared with pigments of various colors, and otherwise ornamented with down, white and red. Four ranks of chanters and musicians were in attendance. The dancers claimed to be inspired by the cormorant. They danced to the music of three ranks of the singers, till their chants closed,

taking little seasons for rest and smoking. When the fourth rank struck the drum and "*lifted up their voices,*" the inspiration was poured out and the welkin trembled, and the dancers approached the fishes in a rage, like starving beasts, and without using their hands, tore off piece after piece, scales, bones, entrails and all, and swallowed them, drinking at the same time from their bark dishes. Nothing remained at the close except the heads, fins and large bones, which they had deposited in their nests. To end the ceremony, what few articles of clothing had been worn on the occasion, were offered in sacrifice to the gods.

Thus, while the favor of the TAKU WAKAN was secured, the fact that the dancers were inspired, was demonstrated to most of the six hundred wondering spectators. By performances of thousands of wakan things, such as have been hinted at, these men triumphantly substantiate their claims to inspiration, and they are fully believed to be "the great powers of the gods," and, among their people, hold a position like that of the THUGS of India. The wakan qualities which these persons possess, or assume to possess, qualify them to act in any capacity and in any emergency.

THE. MEDICINE MAN A PRIEST.

As a priest, with all the assurance of an eye-witness—of an equal and of intimate and long continued communion, he bears testimony for the divinities. He gives a minute description of their physical appearance, their dwelling place, and their attendants. He reveals their disposition, their powers and their employments, as one who has been with them. He dictates prayers and chants, institutes fasts and feasts, dances and sacrifices. He defines sin and its opposite and their respective consequences. In short, he imposes upon the people a system of demonism and superstition, to suit their depraved tastes and passions, and caprices, and circumstances, and interests as savages, with an air of authority and with a degree of cunning which does seem to be almost superhuman—a system so artfully devised, so well adapted to them, so congenial to them, that it readily weaves itself into, and becomes a part of them, as really as the woof becomes a part of the texture, ensuring their most obsequious submission to its demands. It becomes part of their body, soul and spirit. They breathe and speak, and sing and live it. It is not something that can be assumed and laid off at pleasure.

In the character of a priest, the influence of these demons in human form is so complete and universal, that thirty years ago, scarce an individual could be found among them who was not a servile religionist. Every individual was trained to it from early infancy. Mothers put the consecrated offering into the little unconscious hand of their babes at the breast, and caused them to cast the present to the god. As soon as the little tongue could articulate, it was taught to say, "grandfather befriend me;" or "grandmother befriend me." On one occasion the writer witnessed a whole band, old and young, male and female, march out to the lake shore in Indian file, and perform their acts of devotion, and offer their prayers at the back of the medicine man, who was at the same time officiating between them and the god—each individual was obliged to the performance—the mothers fixing the little mouths of unconscious infants carefully, reverently, on the stem of the consecrated pipe, which the priest extended to them backward over his shoulder.

Much as the savage loves ease and self-indulgence he will cheerfully subject himself to almost any privation, discomfort and toil, for days, weeks, or even months together, in order to procure the necessary provisions for a sacrifice which the priest assures him the gods demand. If he fails he fully believes that the penalty may be the infliction of any, or all the evils to which an Indian is exposed. A man made a trip on foot from the "Little Rapids," on the Minnesota river, to Big Stone Lake, and purchased and brought on his back, a pack of dried buffalo meat, weighing, probably, sixty or seventy pounds, a distance of nearly two hundred miles, to be used in the medicine-dance—a sacrifice to the Onktehi and to the souls of the dead. This he did because the priest had assured him that it was the will of the TAKU-WAKAN.

THE WAR PROPHECY.

In this capacity the wakan-man is an indispensable necessity. Every Dakota man sixteen years old and upward, is a soldier, and is formally and *wakanly* enlisted into his service.

From him he receives the implements of war, as the spear and tomahawk, carefully constructed after a model furnished from the armory of the gods, painted after the divine prescription and charged with the missive virtue—the tonwan—of the divinities. From him also he receives those paints which serve as an armature for the body.

To obtain these necessary articles from the MDE TAHUNKA—the War Prophet—the proud applicant is required, for a time, to abuse himself and serve him, while he goes through a series of painful and exhausting performances, which are necessary on his part to enlist the favorable notice of the gods. These performances consist chiefly of “vapor-baths,” fastings, chants, prayers, and nightly watching.

The spear and tomahawk being prepared and duly consecrated and rendered wakan, the person who is to receive them, with a most piteous wail and suppliant aspect, approaches the god-man and reverently presents to him the pipe of prayer. He then lays his trembling hand on the head of his master, and sobs out his desires in substance as follows :

“Pity thou me, poor and helpless—a woman—and confer on me the ability to perform manly deeds.”

The prophet then, with the majestic mien of a god, places in his hand the desired weapons, as he says, “Go thou and test the swing of this tomahawk, and the thrust of this spear; but when in triumph thou shalt return—a man—forget not thy vows to the gods.”

In this manner every man, it is said, is enlisted into the service of the war prophet, and enlisted for life.

The weapons thus received, are preserved by the Dakota warrior, as sacredly as was the “ark of the covenant” by the pious Hebrew of ancient times. They are carefully wrapped in cloth, together with sacred pigments, and in fair weather are every day laid outside of the lodge, and may never be touched by an adult female.

Every warrior feels that his success, both on the battle-field and in the chase, depends entirely upon the strictness, promptness and constancy with which he adheres to the rules which are imposed upon him by the wakan war leader.

The influence of the medicine-man in this capacity, permeates the whole community, and it is hardly possible to over-estimate it. Those who are led by him will be murderers, it is their trade. They are commissioned for this. Those who are bound to these war-prophets, by such rites, *will be led by him unless they renounce their religion.*

The Indian, if he can, will kill a foe, whoever he be, as long as he is a pagan. He is as apt to do it as a duck is to swim. The favor of the gods, and even his very manhood, depends upon it. He is not a man till he has killed a foe. Till their hands have been dipped in

blood they are liable to be abused and insulted in the most outrageous manner. Young men, in sight of St. Paul, have been obliged to assume the petticoat and exhibit themselves as women in the public dance, because they had not killed a foe. The *pagan* Indian, in a sense, is obliged to be a murderer.

THE MEDICINE MAN A DOCTOR.

The power of the Doctor "caps the climax." In him all the powers of the gods meet, as the colors blend in the rain-bow. The doctor is revered as much, perhaps, as the superior gods themselves. The subordinate gods dwell in them and confer on them the power to *suck out disease* from the human body. If long without practice, it is said that the gods in them become restless, and subject them to much inconvenience. To pacify them it is represented that they sometimes obtain and drink considerable quantities of human blood.

When one of these doctors has been called, with due respect, to administer relief to a sick person, the patient is placed on a blanket on the ground, in a lodge vacated for the purpose, with the body chiefly naked. The doctor also lays off his own clothes, except the breech cloth. After chants and prayers, the rattling of the sacred shell, and numerous other noisy ceremonies, with an air and attitude of self-conceit and impudence, which only a devil could inspire, he mutters out the following, or something similar: "The gods told me that having this, I might approach the bones of a dead man even, and set him on his feet." He then drops on his knees, at the patient's side, and applying his mouth to the part of the body immediately over what is supposed to be the seat of the disease, he sucks with frenzy, at the same time rattling the shell with the utmost violence. In this manner, the god which is in the doctor, draws the disease from the sufferer. After a considerable time spent in this manner, like an enraged beast, he suddenly starts to his feet in apparent agony. He utters dreadful, indescribable sounds, in variety, and groans which may be distinctly heard for a mile or more, at the same time violently striking his sides with his hand, and the earth with his feet, twisting the whole body into the most hideous contortions. He now grasps a dish of water with his left hand, and proceeds, with a disgusting sing-song bubbling, with his mouth in the water, to deposit the disease in the dish, keeping time still with the sacred rattle which he continues to shake with great energy.

This operation is continued with brief intervals for smoking, for hours and sometimes day after day and night after night. This process sometimes effects a cure at once. At other times extra demonstrations are deemed necessary. The doctor ascertains the sin which has been committed, and the particular god which has been offended and inflicted the disease. Then he makes an image of the offended god, which he hangs on a pole and which is shot by three or four persons in rapid succession. As the image falls the spirit of the god which is in the doctor, leaps out, and falling upon the spirit represented by the image, kills it. On this it is expected that the sick one will recover. But it is not absolutely certain that even this will prove effectual. After repeated experiments, the doctor often discovers that the god who inflicts the disease is mightier than the one by whom he is inspired, and he desists. Now, unless another doctor is found, competent to expel the demon, death ensues. The wakan-men are wakan to a degree corresponding to the strength of the gods by whom they are respectively inspired.

If the higher doctor can be found, health will be restored, but it is difficult to obtain their aid. If not duly respected at all times, and on all occasions, and in all their relations, and well remunerated for their services, in advance, they may let the patient die without exerting their powers, or perform their work deceitfully. This seems to be a necessary provision of their system, as it affords ample room to account satisfactorily for all failures. This operation is termed Wapiyapi, or renovation. There are instances where the doctor prevails on the gods to come in person and perform the operation for him. The following description of such a scene was obtained from an Indian who was present on the occasion. The doctor was named RED BIRD, of the Lake Calhoun band, who was killed with his son by the Chippewas in the memorable battle of Rum River, in the summer of 1839. The sack of Red-Bird, which contains the symbols of the gods, and which was used on the occasion to which the narrative relates, has since providentially fallen into the hands of the writer, and will be herewith forwarded as a relic of superstition worthy of preservation. The gods employed were the TAKU-SKAN-SKAN:

“A man had been sick a considerable time, and many of the wakan-men had attempted, to the extent of their ability, to exorcise him, but without any favorable results. Red-Bird had in his service many of the gods called Taku-skan-skan. It was decided in council

that the case should be referred to them. Accordingly, in the evening, a feast was prepared for the gods, to which they were called by chants, on the part of the medicine-men. A tent of parchment was prepared for them. The doctor was bound, by carefully weaving strings and tying them firmly in all his fingers and toes. Then his arms were bound behind his back and he rolled up in a buffalo robe, and carefully bound in it by cords around it outside. He had a little boulder in his bosom, a symbol of the gods. He charged those who bound him to do it thoroughly, assuring them that his boys—his gods—would come and release him. He was so bound that he could not stir and then was rolled into the tent, and the sick man was placed by his side. Over him was hung a drum and a deer-hoof rattle; a large number of spectators were in attendance—men, women, and children. Red Bird ordered that certain men present should chant to the gods, which they did. The doctor, in the mean time, was very demonstrative with his wakan jargon. A young man, who had been appointed for that purpose, then gave a wild yell, and all lights were suddenly extinguished. At the instant, a strong wind struck the tent, and the doctor cried out, as if he were in great fear, "Boys come carefully, your father is very weak, be careful." But the gods did not seem to regard the admonition and beat the drum, shook the rattle and heaved the tent furiously. The tent seemed to be full of them and they were very talkative and rude, but their voices were so fine, so soft, that we could not comprehend their meaning. They performed the ceremony of exorcising the sick man. The sounds they made were so different from what we had been accustomed to hear, and so ludicrous that we could scarcely refrain from laughter, though we had been forewarned that if any one should laugh he should be knocked down. The gods called for a pipe, and smoked many pipe's-full, indicating a large number of them, but it was dark and they could not be seen. Suddenly the gods were all gone, and the doctor ordered the torches to be lighted. All expected to see him still bound, as he was thrust into the tent; but, to their surprise, he was out of the robe, and all of his fingers and toes slipped out of their fastenings, though not a single knot had been untied. The sick man began from that time to recover, though all sick persons who are treated in this manner do not recover. All were confirmed in their faith and confidence in the Taku-Wakan."

In some cases the sick are cured by obtaining a new blanket, and consecrating it to this class of gods, and then wrapping the sick person in it.

VAPOR BATH.

As frequent allusion has been made to this ceremony, and as it is a rite which is so frequently observed, it seems necessary that it should be explained. The following description of this rite is furnished by Rev. S. R. Riggs :

SIMON'S INIPI.

He took *eight poles* about the size of hoop-poles, of any wood that would bend readily, and putting the large ends in the ground, at proper distances in a circle, bent them over and tied them together at the top. This frame-work he then covered with robes and blankets, leaving a small hole for a door at one side. It was a little higher than a man's head, when seated within. Before the door, he built a fire, and having selected four round stones (or nearly round) about as big as a man's head (size not essential), he placed them in the fire. He called Wamdiokiya to be high priest on the occasion. The high priest then ordered him to call so many to be his helpers—the number determined by the size of the tabernacle—from two to five. With these he entered into the *wokeya*, all entirely naked.

Simon stands at the door without, by the fire, to attend the stones. He has made two paddles about twelve inches long and painted them red. These are to be used by the man within to move the stones with. He covers the ground, between the tent door and the fire, with nice feathers and cut tobacco. When the stones are heated, the chief within calls to him to roll in the first one. This he does, with a brand, putting tobacco upon it and praying to it—"Turkan wahipani mada wo, toka wahte kta wacia." So he rolls one after another of the stones over the tobacco and feathers and prays to each one. The men within receive them and roll them to the middle with the painted paddles—singing, hi, hi, hi, hi.

They then commence their songs ; each one has a song. They all pray to the *Tankan* to give Simon help in the day of battle, to make him strong and furious and successful. The chief then says to his fellows : "Have mercy on me, I will cool these stones." And he proceeds to pour water on them. The steam fills the tent, which has

been closed entirely after the stones were rolled in. Then they pray to the *Taku skan-skan* or to the *Wasican*. All their gods are called *Wasican*.

Simon, this while, stands without crying and praying. The chief *wakan* man receives an encouraging communication from the stone god which he delivers to Simon. When the stones are cold, they all cry and come out of the booth. So ends this sacrifice to the stone god."

The doctors count much on the efficacy of this "vapor bath." Perhaps no other one rite is in more general use than this, on the part of all who wish to become conspicuously *wakan*.

As regards the medicine-man as a doctor, or exorcist, or juggler, it is not only believed that he can cure diseases, but that he can inflict them at his pleasure, on any person who may dare to offend him. It only requires a *purpose* on his part. They are feared, if possible, more than the gods themselves, for *they are present* in the camp and in the lodge.

If a person is sick, he will give all he possesses and all he can obtain on credit, to secure the services of one of them, and will cheerfully give a horse, in advance, for a single performance such as has been described. In almost innumerable instances, families sacrifice all that they have on these pretenders, and to be abandoned by them is felt to be a dire calamity. Parents are as careful to train their children to respect and revere them, as was an early Puritan to inspire his children with reverence for the divine institutions of Christendom. They are respected. They sit in the highest and have the best of everything. If some among them are thought to be mere pretenders, this circumstance only serves to enhance the importance of those who are believed to be true.

Thus, by imposing on an ignorant, savage people, "gods many," gods of life and gods of death, gods of hate and revenge and lust, gods of cold and of heat, gods of all the various passions, gods of lying, deceit and wrong, gods of gluttony and drunkenness, gods of lasciviousness and impurity, gods of conception and abortion, gods innumerable—hideous and horrid monsters, which are the creation of the inflamed and bedeviled imaginations of these Thugs—these *wakan* men—they exert an influence over them, in the various official capacities which they assume, which is absolute and which per-

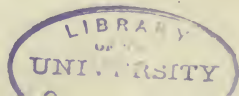
vades Dakota society—an influence which bears with all its force on each individual of their victims, which tends to crush him down still deeper, if indeed there are depths below them, in ignorance, superstition, degradation and misery of soul and body, and force them into an unreserved surrender to their own whims and caprices. Of these wakan men there are from five to twenty five in each of the little clans of Dakotas.

Alkalies and acids mingled produce effervescence. A like result attends the contact of any opposing influences. Nothing can exceed the antagonism that lies between TRUTH and the system of superstition which is the subject of the foregoing paper. Root, trunk, branches and leaves there is not the smell of truth to be found on it. It is plainly opposed to truth and truth is opposed to it. It is opposed by the truth of history, the truth of science, the truth of "animated nature," social truth, political truth and spiritual truth. *All* truth tends directly to its destruction. A little boy was one day listening to a missionary who was endeavoring to explain to him the workings of the magnetic telegraph. The little half naked fellow seemed to catch an idea of natural truth, and starting up, excitedly exclaimed. "If that is true, then all our religion is false." A glimpse of truth broke the spell that bound his mind, and shook their whole system of superstition to its foundations. It never recovered its hold on him. For more than thirty years, truth, in variety, has been held to the Dakota mind. With a keen and jealous eye, these wakan men have watched its workings. It has mortified and pained them to see their cords of error snapped by it, one after another, and their hold on their blind victims loosened. Their "craft was in danger." They have cried with voice and soul, these thirty years, "Great is the Taku Wakan—the Taku-Wakan is wakan, and I am their prophet."

They have done all they could and dare do, in the circumstances, to oppose the progress of truth among their people, by slanders and snares, gibes and abuse, and violence, and even murder. But in spite of their vigilance and efforts to oppose, truth advanced with slow but steady step, and worked like "leaven in the meal." Old men and young men, old women and young women, boys and girls, left them, and by open profession of regard for truth, stood boldly up in the face of their lies. The symbols of the gods, which the priests, war prophets and doctors had painted, wreathed and paraded "on

every hill," were defiantly spurned from their places by the feet of those who had been used to obey their caprices and crouch to their authority. The feasts and dances were less fully attended, the medicine-sack cast away, while hundreds of their former dupes, emancipated, read daily in their Bibles, sung the song of Zion, and prayed, in their houses, to their "Father in heaven;" and on the Sabbath assembled in the Christian church, erected by their own hands, and seriously, reverently, joined in the holy worship of the God of heaven. At sight of this, the rage of these demons in human form boiled over. The effervescence was mighty. Threats were fulminated and nothing but opportunity was wanting for them to rise, and re-establish by violence, the waning power of the TAKU-WAKAN, and to return, wading through the blood of Christians, if need be, to the homes of their pagan fathers. They hoped to be able to roll back the providential wheels of the Almighty God.

That opportunity, they deemed, had arrived when all our young men were being marched off to the South, probably to be swept away by the great rebellion. Hence, the "out-break" of 1862. True, it has been said that the *Christian* Indians were our worst enemies, but where is the evidence of this? Were not those *Christian* Indians, at least by profession, who rescued companies of our people from death, and conducted them, through perils, to a place of safety? Which is the exception? Were not those *Christian* Indians who, in a considerable number of cases sacrificed their little all and risked their lives to protect individuals and conduct them to safety? Were there any exceptions? Which was the *pagan* Indian who performed such a deed? Were not those *Christian* Indians, who, encouraged by General Sibley, effected the deliverance from bondage and death, or treatment worse than death, of hundreds of captives at "Camp Release?" Did not the leaders of that band bear *Christian* names, given to them in the holy ordinance of baptism? Who are they who have composed the band of faithful "scouts," three long years standing on our frontiers to protect our citizens from the scalping-knife of the worshippers of the *Taku-wakan*, but *Christian* Indians? Was there an exception here? It is not claimed for these Indians that they were *model Christians*, but they were Christians by profession, and their names and the names of their wives and children stood enrolled on the records of the Christian church.



On the other hand, who led the murderous bands in work of the destruction? "*Little Crow*" and his *Wakan* associates, who, from old time, had been the open and determined enemies of the Christian religion, and most zealous and devoted worshippers of the *Taku-wakan*. It is not denied that individuals, professing Christians, were involved in the wrong and fled with the pagans to the plains. We could name a few such.

Even those of the pagan party who surrendered themselves to our military authorities, felt that the Wood Lake battle was the result of the strife between their *Medicine-men* and "*God Almighty*;" and from that day, in their minds, the doom of their gods and of their representatives was sealed. They soon cast away even the symbols of their divinities, and a large portion of them began to seek to know how to worship the God of the Bible.

Those wakan-men will never suffer their people to enter into an honest treaty of peace with us while they are wakan-men. They can never be trusted. Circumstances may render them harmless, but by their own showing, they are *essentially wakan*. They are devils incarnate.

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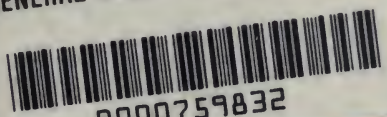
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