



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

MAT HOUSES.

TRIBAL LIFE AMONG THE OMAHAS.

PERSONAL STUDIES OF INDIAN LIFE.



FROM one of the so-called «cities» of the upper Missouri, armed only with so much governmental indorsement as would insure me courteous assistance from officers stationed at posts on the frontier, and the respectful recognition of reservation officials, I set out upon my journey into the Indian country. It was years ago, but, except for the personal milestones down the vista, it would seem to me as distant as a dream. For I behold fields of waving grain where then was unbroken prairie, the glistening track of the locomotive where the buffalo trail broke through the sod, and thriving towns, the ambitious spires of which rise incisive above the sky-line, where then was only the Indian home, as unobtrusive and as harmonious with nature as the nest of the bird; and I hear the «busy hum of men,» the tones of many people speaking many tongues, where then silence was broken only by the cry of the coyote, the wings of the locust, or the waves of the wind on the wide sea of the tall prairie-grass.

It was in a stout covered wagon drawn by a pair of well-conditioned mules, and packed in with boxes, bundles, tin cans, blankets,

and all the paraphernalia of a camper who takes his life in his own hand, and depends only upon his own providence as he goes out into an unknown land for an unknown time, cutting off all communications with any base of supplies behind him. But this is not the place to recite my many adventures as I toiled on over what was in my early school-days the Great American Desert, leaving behind even the most intrepid pioneer, crossing the very fringe of civilization, until at last I came out upon the boundless prairie, where no plow had ever turned a furrow, and the grass reached to the top of my wagon. This, and nothing more: not the glimmer of water anywhere; not a cloud in the white sky to temper with a shadow the intense glare of the August sun; not a landmark to help the eye to measure distance; and silence, save for the rustle of the yellow grass and the muffled tread of the mules in the rich, black loam. There was no touch of familiarity in the scene, no association of song or story; only a vague impression that a race had passed over and left no trace. I could find nothing to connect myself with nature so unaltered by man; there was nothing here on my own plane of life; and thus, alone and self-centered, a sense of loneliness began to oppress me, when a sound fell upon my ear—

a strange sound, but with a human tone in it. It trembled through the air with more penetration than volume, rising and falling in weird cadences. Out over the rolling prairie I saw on one of the billowy hills, sharply defined above the horizon, an Indian on horseback; his head was erect, and his statuesque body was one with the pony that with drooping head ambled along in its own unconscious independence.

The easy figure, the wayward song, the solitary man in the vastness of incontaminated nature, the apparent content of him, the absence of all concern with time, of all knowledge of the teeming life out of which I had come, and which was even now surging toward him, threatening to engulf his race, touched a new thought-center and awoke a new interest. Old prejudices, old opinions, were all behind me; I had crossed the line, another race had welcomed me with a song,

the complexities of details which make up the «simple life» of the race we are so rapidly supplanting on this continent.

I have lived with the Indian in his homes. Sometimes it was the «wickiup,» a mere cluster of branches twisted together; sometimes a framework covered with mats made of rushes, or, as in forest tribes, with the bark of the elm-tree. These bark houses are still found among the Winnebagos, and they are not unlike a section of the long house of the Iroquois.

Indian dwellings are generally communal. In the long house each family has a section and a fireplace of its own. West of the Rocky Mountains the long house was built by setting up three poles in a triangle, tying their tops together. Several of these groups were placed in a line, and over all mats were laid. Within each triangle of poles dwelt a family, having its separate fire; six, eight, or



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

BARK HOUSES.

and casting the old standards aside, I began the study of the Indian in his own home, by his side, from his own standpoint.

In the years which have passed since then I have never ceased to strive patiently for more knowledge of the Indian. I have gone back with him into the dim past, have shared with him the changing present, have tried to forecast his future, have alternately hoped and despaired for him, pressed always by the desire which is sure to arise in those who succeed in catching a glimpse of his real character—the intense desire to «do something» for his betterment; his protection, if you will. In these papers I can give only bits of the knowledge gained, only hints of

ten fires were often seen in perspective down the middle of the long dwelling. On the Pacific coast the communal houses were, and are, large square structures of logs, having, in some tribes, carved posts within and totem-poles without. There are compartments along the side walls in which each family sets up its own hearthstone. Families living in single habitations gratify their communal feeling by huddling their huts together, sometimes connecting them by mats stretched between, forming a wind-break or shade. In the observance of religious ceremonies there is a reversion to primitive customs, and the long communal tent is still erected and used on such occasions.

The most elaborate structure used for a dwelling by the tribes of the West was the earth lodge. The outline—a circle with an oblong projection toward the east—was carefully measured and traced on the ground, the sod cut from within the figure, and the earth well tramped by the feet of the builders. The framework was of poles, and the dome-shaped roof of closely laid poles was supported by

line of smoke they would not be noticed by the inexperienced eye. It seems as though Mother Earth had lifted her flowery robe, and taken her children under it. The ground-plan of the earth lodge is common to structures from the Arctic Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico. When I passed through the long passageway of an Eskimo dwelling to the semi-subterranean room, with its domed roof



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

THE EARTH LODGE.

ENGRAVED BY P. AITKEN.

large posts, five or more in number, set in a circle a little back of the central fireplace. Outside the wall of poles great bundles of the coarse prairie-grass were laid, and over all a double layer of sods, so that when completed the wall was nearly two feet thick at the bottom, and sloped gently to the line where it joined the roof, which was also very thick. To frame it well about the central opening required considerable skill. The exterior resembles a mound more than a dwelling. The grass creeps upon it, and over it the birds drop seeds, from which flowers grow, so that it is completely covered with verdure and bloom, except at the top, where the blackened sod tells of the heat and smoke of the fire below. It is difficult to avoid the idea of intimacy with nature that these abodes convey. They suggest no occupation or disturbing possession of man, and but for the waving

and central opening for light and smoke, I was reminded of the earth lodge of the Indians. Students of the Southwestern tribes have pointed out the resemblance between the ground outline of the Navajo *hogan* and that of the primitive lava *pueblo*, and how the form of the present pueblos has been evolved by bringing together a number of these round dwellings within a rectangular area. But the *estufa*, where all the religious rites and ceremonies are performed, even in the modern pueblo still preserves the ancient circular shape. So the Indians of the North, who now live in tents, when they assemble to observe certain sacred rites draw the outline of the earth lodge upon the ground, and remove the sod, laying bare the fresh earth, upon which they drop offerings of tobacco, sweet grass, or the down of birds. It is a well-known law that ancient forms which have

pertained to the practical necessities of life in a forgotten age are preserved in religious ceremonies by symbols which in time become overlaid with mythical meanings.

The Indian's love of outdoor life makes even a wickiup too confined for constant habitation, so everywhere one sees an open shelter from the sun, a simple framework of poles thatched with boughs. These are sometimes isolated, and sometimes project like a portico from the bark or mat house. Here the people eat, work, have their social chats, receive visitors, and in warm weather sleep undisturbed by fear of marauders.

Few habitations are more picturesque than Indian tents, whether grouped on the prairie, half buried amid the tall grass and brilliant flowers, or clustered under the trees. Frequently the outside of the tent is decorated with a brilliant symbolical device representing some power of earth or air a vision of which has appeared to the head of the family in his fastings and vigils.

Pleasing as the tents are by day, with the waving shadows of the grass or the broad flecks of sunlight from between the branches of the trees upon their white sides, which shade into a dull brown at the tops, where the skin-covering is discolored by the smoke ascending in lazy, blue columns, the true time to enjoy the beauty of an Indian camp is at night. Then the tents are illuminated by a central fire, and are all aglow under the stars, the silhouettes of the inmates creating an animated shadow world. Here one catches the picture of a group of children watching an elder twisting his fingers to form a fox chasing a rabbit on the tent wall (perhaps some one is telling a myth about the little fellow, for suddenly the shadow rabbit sits up, waving his ears as though he had outwitted his pursuer); yonder a woman is lifting the pestle, pounding corn in the great wooden mortar; near by are some young girls with their heads together, whispering secrets; old men recline on one elbow, smoking; and over there a young man is bidding the baby boy dance; while the sound of song and friendly chatter fills the air. The picture is of a life simple and contented within itself.

The sweat lodge, which is almost universal among Indian tribes, is built, when possible, on the margin of a stream, and is practically a small tight tent or lodge. When the people take a bath in the steam rising from water sprinkled upon heated stones, they generally sing religious songs; and no ceremony is entered upon by the "mystery men" without first passing through this semi-religious act

of purification, for danger and disease are believed to be averted by its agency.

On every journey that I made with the Indians I was surprised afresh by the ease with which the home traveled; for, except when the family lived in an earth lodge, everything was packed up and taken along. If any were so fortunate as to possess a surplus supply of food or clothing, they would store it in a cache, which they might either conceal or leave undisguised. The cache was dug in a dry place, sometimes lined with poles, but often left with no wall but the hard soil. The goods were covered with skins, the earth was thrown over, and the place marked with piles of stones. Meat, corn, clothing, and other personal property were kept for months in this manner, and no one disturbed the hidden store.

Many a time, while the morning stars were still shining, I have watched the mother dismantle the tent-poles, wrench them out of their earth sockets, and lash them, two on a side, to a meek pony that had outlived his skittish days, and was now to be trusted with the little ones, who would ride in a comfortable nest made of the folded tent-cover fastened between the trailing poles. Before ponies were obtainable, dogs were the burden-bearers, and in some remote places they are still used. Great were the snarls and quarrels incident to a dog-train. Often an irritable fellow would find himself on his back, or caught by his poles, so that he became frantic with impotent rage. When fording a stream, the children and the puppies were carried over on the backs of women; the dogs and ponies had to plunge for themselves.

The tribes living on the larger rivers used boats of various constructions. The circular skin boat, made by stretching a rawhide over a framework of withes, was to be found on the Missouri, and curiously resembled those in use centuries ago on the Euphrates. Fairly heavy loads could be transported in these primitive vessels, and they were commonly used by the early traders.

Indian journeyings were not the mere wanderings of a homeless people, but had always a purpose and an objective point in view. Aside from war expeditions, offensive or defensive, there were hunting and fishing excursions, which took place as regularly as the seasons came round. But the Indian always came back to his home, his strong attachment to which we have been forced to recognize in the perils of those ejections we have from time to time undertaken in the interests of our own race, although the

incursions of a stranger enemy, or the exigencies of food-supply, sometimes forced a tribe to change its location in search of safety or subsistence.

Indians, contrary to widely received opinions, are of a social nature, and fond of paying friendly visits, the etiquette of which would make a chapter of itself. Not much attention is given to the order of their going while in the dust of travel, but when arrived within a short distance of their destination a halt is called, the ponies are relieved of their burdens, the rawhide packs are opened, and gala dresses and fine ornaments come to light. The two young men selected to be the bearers of gifts of tobacco deck themselves for their mission and ride on in advance. A surprise party is not in the Indian's list of amusements; he takes his enemy unawares, but not his friend. The young men return with messages of welcome; sometimes members of the family to be visited come with them personally to conduct the party. Meanwhile all have been busy prinking: brushing and braiding their locks, painting their faces, and donning their best gear, the wide prairie their dressing-room, their mirrors each other's eyes. When the visiting party is again *en route*, there is not a man or woman who is not gorgeous with color and the glit-

ter of shell or feather finery. Even the children have daubs of fresh paint on their plump little cheeks, while the dudes are wonderful to behold, resplendent in necklaces, embroidered leggings, and shirts, and with ornaments innumerable braided into their scalp-locks. The visit over, the Indians go back to their homes pleased and contented, happy if they find, as may not always be the case, that the enemy have not been at work in their absence.

If the «primitive» man led a life void of any definite purpose beyond that of the maintenance of the body, was without any social organization with his fellows, but wandered aimlessly about, guided solely by personal wants or inclinations, and bound by no sense of duty or obligation, we shall not find this «primitive» man in the North American Indian. The principle of mutual helpfulness is a controlling force in the struggle for existence in the merely animal kingdom, and much more has man come under its operations. What happens to the too independent crow in the colony happens also to the human individual who ignores the interests and tramples upon the rights of his fellows. History reveals no people in the past, nor can we find living to-day any race or tribe, without some sort of social organization.



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

THE SWEAT LODGE.

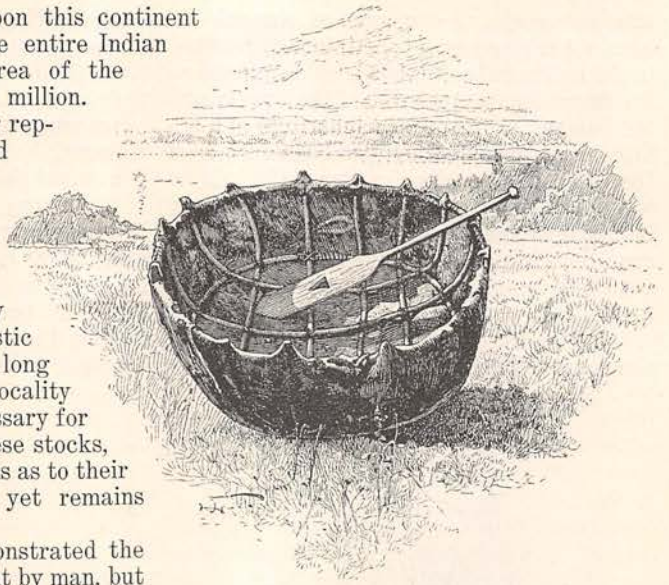
ENGRAVED BY H. E. SYLVESTER.

When our race entered upon this continent it is questionable whether the entire Indian population of the present area of the United States exceeded half a million. Yet this inconsiderable number represented hundreds of tribes, and these, when grouped according to the laws of their languages, showed that there were many distinct families or stocks, each one, so far as is known, differing from the other as widely as the Aryan and Semitic linguistic families of our own race. A long period of isolation in some one locality would seem to have been necessary for the development of each of these stocks, and there are many speculations as to their birthplaces, but the question yet remains open.

Scientific research has demonstrated the long occupancy of this continent by man, but the great chasm lying between his advent here and the era of our acquaintance with him cannot be bridged even by the most patient investigations. We may not, however, despise the little light archæology has been able to throw upon the hidden centuries of the past. From excavations which reveal glimpses of ancient arts and ancient rites, light filaments of old aspirations and beliefs may float back to those far-away days, and upon these delicate threads our thoughts may travel and reach some of the secrets of the long-lost aborigines, which may help to reconcile the curious contradictions found among the Indians of to-day. On the one hand we have groups of people speaking mutually unintelligible tongues, languages unlike in sound and structure, for the development of which there would seem to be necessary a long period of isolation; and on the other hand we find a singular similarity between these groups in their tribal organization, their religious beliefs and worship, and their domestic life and ceremonies.

Professor F. W. Putnam, in his remarkable investigations in the Ohio valley and elsewhere, has shown¹ that several waves of migration or conquest have passed over this country during eons of time; that here, as on the Eastern continent, the long, narrow-headed people of the North have met the short, broad-headed people from the South, bringing with them a higher culture; and in some places these two have passed by each other, and in other localities they have dwelt

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DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

BULL-BOAT.

together and formed a new type. Thus we have to-day Indians agreeing in many things among themselves, yet differing widely in physical characteristics, in their arts, and in their language; and among them we find the survival of ancient arts and customs. Here the clue is found to explain why it so often happens that while studying a group of tribes and finding so many points in common, we are suddenly brought face to face with a great irreconcilable difference. We have struck that strange persistent individuality of a people which is so apt now and then to reveal itself. One race may overlap another, and that which brings superior culture may modify the arts or cults of the other; but here and there a point will be reached where the receptive flexibility ceases, and the integrity of the original stock will be maintained. So, under the seeming likeness of one tribe to another, there are rugged projections of contrast rising from a deeper stratum than that whereon the similarity rests.

Aside from the fascination of the picturesque and the strange in the life of the Indian, there is for general observers, as well as for the student, a deeper interest in the contemplation of him as belonging to an order of society which in other lands had preceded those forms first recorded in history. Among the aborigines of America the tribe can still be recognized as in its various stages of development; and while the social order thus revealed by no means represents

primitive society,—for ages of struggle lie back of the governmental attainment reached in the Indian tribe,—it has been developed on the same lines as the tribe of the Greeks and the Romans. As we are the inheritors of a political government which has been developed from that of the tribes of Europe, it will be of interest to glance at the structure of an Indian tribe, and to observe there the same conditions which have antedated those revealed to us in the tracing of our own history.

We take for illustration the Omaha tribe, a member of the Dakotan or Siouan linguistic

traces in the ceremonies and customs of the Siouan group. Dakotan names linger on the rivers and mountains along their migratory path, and are preserved in States which embrace much of their ancient territory—Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, and North and South Dakota.

The name «Omaha» bears testimony to the long journey of the people, and reveals some of the causes which brought about this breaking up into distinct tribes. It is composed of two words which signify «going against the current,» or up the stream. The Omahas were the people who went up the



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FROM THE TENT TO THE CABIN—THE FIRST STEP TOWARD CIVILIZATION.

stock. In the course of time the mother tongue of this group became differentiated into tribal dialects that now possess little in common outside their structure, so that the language of one tribe is unintelligible to all the rest. Their traditions tell us that these changes have taken place during the slow migrations of the people as they moved westward from the Atlantic coast; and in proof of this a remnant has been recently discovered in the Tutelos of North Carolina, another has been traced in the Biloxis on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, while the most westerly branch is that of the Crows of Montana. In their long wanderings these tribes have come in contact with the culture of the Southern people, of which we see

stream, while the Quapaws, their near of kin, went, as their name reveals, «with the current,» or down the stream. The traditions of both these peoples say that the parting occurred during a hunting expedition, each division finally settling in the lands whither they had wandered apart. This epochal hunt must have been centuries ago, for the Quapaws bore their descriptive name in 1540, being mentioned in the Portuguese narrative of De Soto's expedition as then living on the Arkansas River, where they dwelt until 1839, when they ceded their long-occupied lands to the United States.

In the northwestern journeyings of the «up-stream people» they again and again divided, the last to leave being the Poncas,

who parted from the Omahas within the last few centuries—not so long ago but that the language of the two tribes is practically the same. Ancient village sites, marked by the decay of earth lodges, burial-mounds, and earthworks, tell us of long sojourn in some favored locality, perhaps until war or other disaster caused a fresh migration. When Lewis and Clark, in the beginning of this century, ascended the Missouri, the Omahas were in the vicinity of their present home, controlling an immense tract of land. In 1854 they ceded their hunting-grounds to the United States, reserving for their own occupancy a small tract on the right bank of the Missouri, about seventy miles north of the city which bears their name. Their villages, gardens, and fields lay along the wooded streams, while to the west the buffalo roamed over the rich, rolling prairies. This tribe has never been at war with the white race, and it has been fortunate in its native leaders. Early in the century, Umpa-tunga, or Big Elk, a head chief, left a prophecy with the people which foretold, in a picture drawn from the overflowing of the Missouri, the coming of the white man, and bade the Indians prepare to meet this flood, which would obliterate all their old ways. One June day, a dozen years ago, as I sat in the shade of a red blanket tied to crotched poles, the plats of the reservation spread upon the ground, over which Indians of all ages, some in coats, some in blankets, were bent, while the ponies, wondering at the crowd, peered over their riders' shoulders, across our talk concerning the allotments of land came the cadence of a chant; and looking up, I saw upon a hill hard by an old Indian, facing the east, the sun shining full upon him as with uplifted hand he recited the parable of Big Elk; then calling out that «the flood had come,» he bade the people give heed to the words of the old chief. This message given, he disappeared as suddenly as he had come.

The changes which have befallen the tribe, although radical, have been accepted and welcomed by the more progressive individuals; but there still remain those who are loath to part with ancient habits and customs. Among the progressive are men of heroic mold, who have evinced great mental power in accepting new ideals. There are unwritten epics hidden among these heroes that may some day find utterance; meanwhile the effort to win a place in the midst of our crowding race taxes the energy of all the people. They are beginning to realize that new demands are upon them, which can

be met only by the development of new resources within themselves; and they are thrusting forward their children, some of whom are already entering the professions. However, no rash or iconoclastic hand has been placed upon their ancient beliefs and ceremonies; for the keepers of the sacred tent of war and the sacred pole, discerning the signs of the times, have resolutely, yet not without a reverent reluctance, placed these articles and their belongings for safe keeping where the history of their tribe is also to be preserved—in the Peabody Museum at Harvard University. This voluntary burial of the tribal past by these leaders, that the people may be freer to enter into the new life of civilization, indicates the remarkable characters that are to be found among our native tribes.

That form of political organization called the tribe, which we are apt to regard as a unit, is not so regarded by the Indian. Its component parts are very distinct to him, and their significance is ever present to his mind. All Indian tribes are made up of a number of separate clans, or *gentes*. There are ten such groups in the Omaha tribe. Each has the general appellation of *Tan-wan-gthan*, or village. In this village we find the simplest political form which exists at the present day; but an examination of the *Tan-wan-gthan* shows that, simple as it is, it has undergone changes during the long centuries in which man has been slowly working out his social relations. The village contains only kindred, and this kinship is traced through one parent only. In the greater number of tribes it is the mother from whom the clan claims descent, but with the Omahas the descent is traced through the father.

Long ages ago the law of exogamy emerged from the darkness that enshrouded primitive society—a law which prevailed all over this country, and which forbade a man or woman to marry in his or her gens, or clan. This law knit the units, or villages, together by natural ties; for, although the descent was traced through one parent only, and a man was bound to but one clan, or gens, there were curious interlacings of interest and authority which grew out of the affection between parents and children. In Indian tribes the husband and wife must always represent two political units, and can never coalesce to form the family as we know it. A daughter, when she married, did not become merged in her husband's gens, as was the case in Greece and Rome; she still belonged to a gens separate from that of her

husband, and its ties dominated all other obligations. The children were political strangers to one parent, and could claim no rights of relationship, broadly speaking, from both parents. Under these conditions there could be no common property in an Indian family; every article had its individual owner, and this personal right of ownership existed alongside of a species of communism which obtained among some of our Indian tribes—a communism that related almost solely to provisions to be used for the entertainment of tribal guests, or for general consumption in the time of scarcity and want. Upon the death of a person, his property passed to the kindred in his clan. A child could not inherit

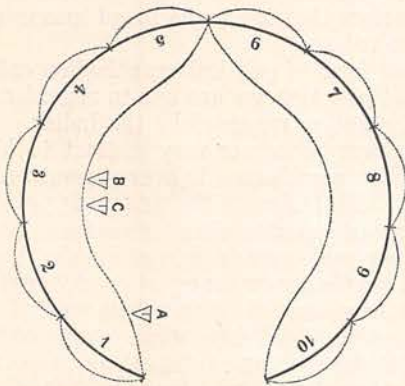
from both parents; it would have only a clan's share in the property of one.

Inheritance, however, is at the minimum in an Indian tribe, not only as regards property, but also in the matter of honors and privileges. Little, if anything, ever descends from individuals; and even among tribes that have something akin to a hereditary chieftaincy, no man can remain a leader long who does not possess the power to attain and hold the office through his own superior ability. It may happen that certain families for several generations produce chiefs, and it is true that a prestige clings to the family of a chief; but the essential fact remains that official positions in an Indian tribe are secured and retained by personal talent rather than by inheritance. This statement does not apply to the appointments made by authority of the United States—"paper chiefs," as they are called, whose power rests solely upon the bolstering of our governmental officials.

The obligations imposed by the clan, or gens, cannot be set aside; they are paramount to all others, and end only with life. Within these groups of kindred each member is held responsible for the acts of every other; every man must take up his kinsman's quarrel and avenge his wrongs. The clan stands at the back of every one, and while none can escape from its exactions, all find safety in its protection.

In the course of time the operations of the law of exogamy did not suffice to bind the villages together in a manner to meet the growing social necessities, and various other causes operated to unite the kinship groups into the tribe. One of these causes is indicated in the Omaha word *Ou-kee-dtae*: when used as a noun it means "tribe," as a verb it signifies "to fight." It is the only word in the Omaha tongue which implies battling at the risk of one's life with enemies outside the tribe. To the Omaha Indian the idea conveyed by the noun and by the verb must have been primarily the same. Thus it would seem that external pressure necessitating union for defense was, in this instance at least, instrumental in determining the tribe. All over the country a chief cause of war was the necessity of protecting hunting- and fishing-grounds, for upon the game and the fish the very life of the people depended.

A glance at the diagram of the Omaha tribal circle will suggest that there must have been other influences at work besides those born of the mere necessity of defense to develop an organization at once so com-



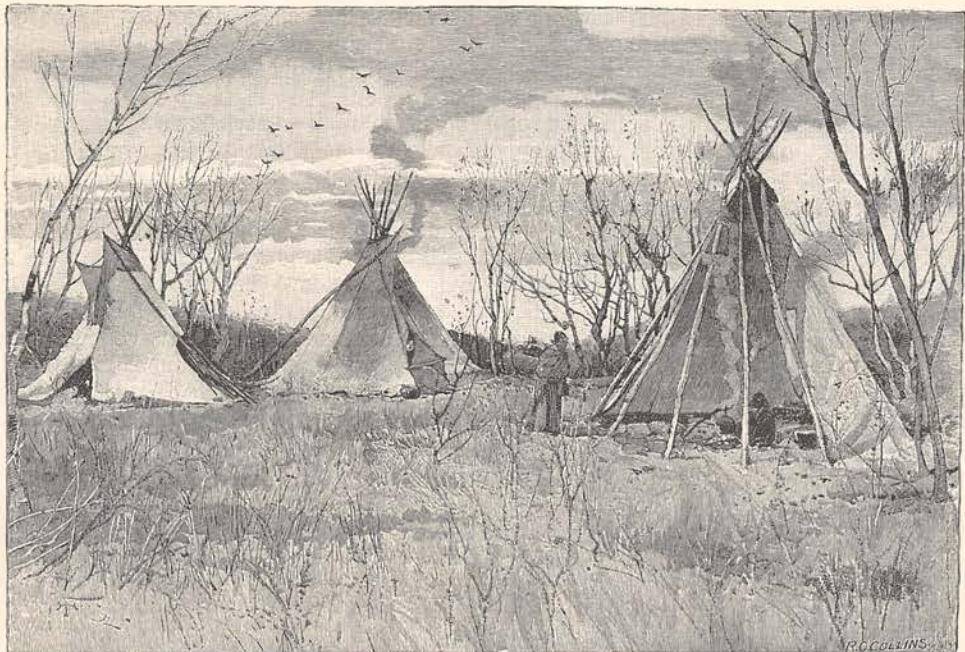
THE OMAHA TRIBAL CIRCLE, OR HOO-THU-GA.

Tan-wan-gthan, or gentes and subgentes.

1. Wa'e'jin-shtae.
 2. In-kae'sabac.
 - a. Ne-ne'ba-tan.
 - b. Ee'ne-ke-thac.
 - c. Wa-the'he-ghae.
 3. Hun'ga.
 - a. Wa-the'tan.
 - b. Hun'ga-lite.
 - c. Wa-sha'bae-tan.
 - d. Wa-hrae'hae-tan.
 4. Tha'ta-da.
 - a. Klu'ka.
 - b. Wa-sa'bae-etazhe.
 - c. Wa-ghin'ga-etazhe.
 - d. Kae'in.
 - e. Tae-pa'etazhe.
 5. Kan'zac.
 - a. Ta-dae'ah-ta.
 - b. Ne-ne'ba-tan.
 6. Man'thin-ka-ga-hae.
 - a. Klu'bae.
 - b. Me'ke-se.
 - c. Min'ha-san-wa-etazhe.
 - d. Ne-ne'ba-tan.
 7. Tae-theen'dae.
 - a. Tae-theen'dae-lite.
 8. Ta-pa'.
 - a. Ne-ne'ba-tan.
 - b. Ta-pa'.
 9. In-g'thae'zhe-dae.
 10. In-shta'sunda.
 - a. In-shta-sunda-hite.
 - b. Ne-ne'ba-tan.
 - c. Wa-shae'tan.
- A. Sacred tent of war.
 B. Tent of sacred white buffalo-skin.
 C. Tent of the sacred pot.

Taboo

- The male elk.
 Charcoal.
 Red corn.
 Tongue and horns of the buffalo.
 Side meat of the buffalo.
 Green or blue paint.
 Tongue of the buffalo.
 Side meat of the buffalo and also the crane.
 Black bear.
 Black bear.
 All birds except the duck.
 Turtle.
 Head of the buffalo.
 Green paint.
 The clay from which green or blue paint is made.
 Down of the swan.
 Buffalo fetus and calf.
 Head of the deer and buffalo.
 Buffalo fetus and calf.
 Reptiles, frogs, toads, and beetles.



DRAWN BY HARRY FENIX.

PART OF THE HOO-THU-GA.

ENGRAVED BY R. C. COLLINS.

compact and so independent of locality. One sees that a different class of ideas has come into play—ideas of great formative power transcending those which concern the merely temporal demands of the people. When these ideas first assumed importance it would be difficult to determine, for the tribe has for generation upon generation pitched its tents in this particular form, to which it gives the name *Hoo-thu-ga*. The diameter of this circle varied from a quarter to nearly a mile, and the width of the opening depended upon the character of the ground or the proximity of dangerous neighbors. In the latter case the ponies were gathered within the inclosure, and the circle of tents was drawn closely together to form a compact line of defense. This outline was carefully observed when the people were on the annual buffalo-hunt, and the opening of the *Hoo-thu-ga* was in the direction in which the tribe was traveling; but when a permanent village was made, the opening faced the east. The lodges composing the *Hoo-thu-ga* were arranged according to the order of the ten gentes which composed the tribe. This order was never broken, each gens having its fixed position as relating to its neighbors. Moreover, this position bore a relation to ancient cults of the people, and had therefore a religious signification.

Looking once more at the diagram of the

tribal circle, we note that each gens bears a special name, suggestive of some one of the elements, or of the animals which play so large a part in man's struggle for existence. To the Omaha the gens not only conveys the idea of a group of kindred, but of a people holding a common descent from some mythical ancestor whose symbol is sacred in the gens. These symbols are of animate or inanimate objects, and to impress the sacredness of the mythical tie of relationship within the gens, the thing symbolized must not be eaten or touched. Each gens has its particular taboo. One gens must not touch the head of the buffalo. The writer recalls the reverent manner in which a man of this gens waved away a spoon made from the buffalo horn when it was offered him to use, saying, "I make it sacred." The penalty for violating, even unwittingly, the taboo of a gens is a visitation of sores, livid spots, inflammation of the eyes, and even blindness. The *In-shta-sunda*, or Thunder gens, do not touch reptiles, toads, or beetles. Some years ago the vegetable-garden of the Omaha mission was visited by the potato-bug. The good missionaries in charge engaged the children in the work of extermination by offering a bounty of five cents a quart, solid measure, for defunct bugs. As the extinction of the species became imminent, some of the young wits adulterated their bugs by the addition

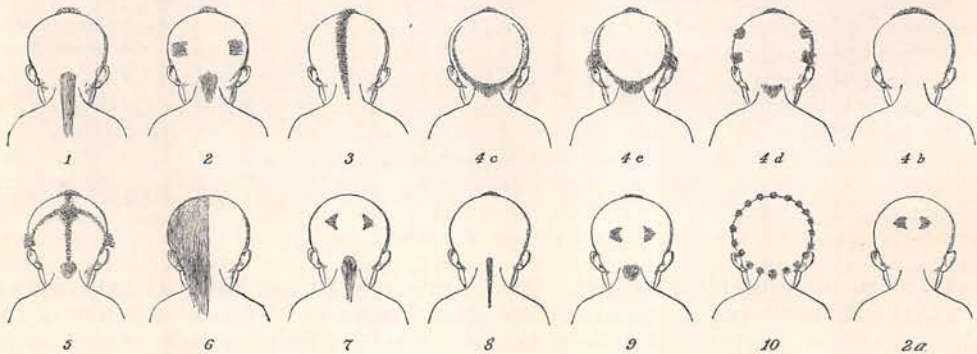
of spurious beetles. About this time one of the little girls became suddenly covered with sores. Her parents, hearing of it, came in consternation to the mission. She belonged to the Thunder gens, and the child's bug income ceased at once. She had unwittingly been carrying on a traffic in her taboo!

Each Tan-wan-gthan has names which belong exclusively to it, and these names all refer to the symbol of the gens. The names in the Thunder gens picture the clouds, lightning, thunder, and their symbols. These names are called *ne-ke-ae*—"spoken by" or "the word of a chief." The chief here referred to is the mythical object of veneration in the gens, as the Thunder gods in

his birth-name, which clings to him more or less closely all his life.

Each gens has not only its exclusive names, but its distinctive style of cutting the hair of the children—a style bearing some real or fancied resemblance to the symbol of the gens. The following sketches show the manner in which the hair of the male child is trimmed from the ages of three to seven years, the first cutting being made with religious ceremony. The numbers and letters refer to the gentes and subgentes on the diagram of the Hoo-thu-ga, or tribal circle.

The ten gentes were grouped into two divisions, five gentes in each, called the In-shta-sunda and the Hun-ga-shae-nu, and both must



DRAWN BY AUGUST WILL, FROM SKETCHES BY EMMA J. GAY.

STYLES OF CUTTING THE HAIR OF OMAHA BOYS.

No. 1 is typical of the head and tail of the elk.—No. 2 symbolizes the head, tail, and horns of the buffalo.—No. 2a. The children of this subgens and those of the *Ne-ne-ba-tan* subgens of other gentes have their hair cut alike; the locks on each side of the bared crown indicate the horns of the buffalo.—No. 3 represents the line of the buffalo's back as seen against the sky.—No. 4b stands for the head of the bear.—No. 4c figures the head, tail, and body of small birds.—No. 4d, the bare head, represents the shell of the turtle; and the tufts, the head, feet, and tail of the animal.—No. 4e pictures the head, wings, and tail of the eagle.—No. 5 symbolizes the four points of the compass connected by cross lines; the central tuft points to the zenith.—No. 6 represents the shaggy side of the wolf.—No. 7 indicates the horns and tail of the buffalo.—No. 8 stands for the head and tail of the deer.—No. 9 shows the head, tail, and knobs of the growing horns of the buffalo calf.—No. 10 symbolizes reptile teeth. The children of this gens sometimes have the hair shaved off so as to represent the hairless body of snakes.

the Thunder gens. The male birth-names are always peculiar to the gentes, and while this is true to a degree of the female birth-names, there are quite a number of these common to several gentes, through a supposed subtle relationship between the symbols or taboos of the different gentes. While an Omaha woman never bears any other than the *ne-ke-ae* name, this does not hold good in all tribes—not even in all of those belonging to the linguistic group of which the Omaha is a member. A numerical name is sometimes given to children, signifying first-born son or daughter, and so on. Some tribes have a set of child-names which are given at birth and superseded at maturity by an adult name belonging to the gens, bestowed with more or less ceremony. Everywhere men, when so inclined, take extra names to commemorate dreams or events in their career, or names may be given in derision or honor, so that a man may have a number; but he never forgets

always be represented in tribal ceremonies, negotiations, and consultations. No council can have authority to act unless there are present at least one chief from the In-shta-sunda side of the Hoo-thu-ga and two chiefs from the Hun-ga-shae-nu. One day, when speaking of this unequal representation to one of the leading men of the Hun-ga-shae-nu, he said, "You see how strong are the In-shta-sunda, since one of their chiefs was enough!" This, to me, was an unfamiliar way of estimating power.

These two divisions resembled somewhat the Greek phratries, and, like those brotherhoods, were based upon religious beliefs and ceremonies. It would lead us into technicalities and carry us beyond the limits of this paper to attempt the dissection of the tribe so as to demonstrate how it came about that the belief in a mysterious kinship between men who were supposed to be descended in some supernatural way from a mythical an-

cestor related to the thunder or the winds, or animate forms, as the bird or the bear, came at last to be a tie transcending all other ties; how the religious idea made stronger the natural bond between the members of a clan, and finally brought about the union of gentes into brotherhoods. The formation of the phratry was a natural result of the domination of the religious idea in the mind of the Indian, rather than the outcome of an external pressure of circumstances or conditions, although such pressure was one of the causes which led the phratries to combine and form the tribe that stood as a unit to the outside world. That the Omahas thought of themselves as a union of phratries rather than as a people united under one political cognomen is evidenced by the manner in which an orator would speak to the collected tribe. He could not say, «Ho, Omahas!» but «Ho, In-shta-sunda, Hun-ga-shae-nu!»

The Omaha tribal circle is the picture of a fixed order. It is far removed from a huddle of tents, or any chance arrangement of kinship groups. Long ages of struggle evidently lie behind this attainment in organization, but how long the ages or how great the struggle none can tell. The Hoo-thu-ga bears the marks of many vicissitudes; the scars are those of ancient rendings when whole groups of people broke away, and there are signs of changes incident to changes of environment and the growth of political ideas. The In-kae-sabae and the Hun-ga are now both buffalo gentes. Hun-ga means «leader»—«one who goes before,» or «the ancient one.» This gens has charge not only of the hunting of the buffalo, but of the planting of the corn, and the care of the sacred tents. All the ceremonies which pertain to the conserving of life and the government of the tribe are more or less directly under the control of the Hun-ga, and the leadership of this gens probably antedated the present organization of the tribe, which bears strong indications of reconstruction under the conditions incident to living in the buffalo country. The corn ceremony, instead of standing out alone, has become a

part of the great tribal ceremony of thanksgiving for the successful buffalo-hunt.

The comparatively stable supply of food which the vast herds of buffalo afforded the tribes living within their range exercised a marked influence upon the growth of society and of political ideas. By means of the buffalo a sort of rude wealth could be acquired, which led to the overthrow of a government by chiefs drawn from particular gentes, and opened the ranks of the oligarchy to men of industry and valor—men who could count their hundreds of *Wa-thin-ae-thae*—certain prescribed gifts made under certain conditions.¹ This was a step toward the triumph of the individual over the domination of the clan, and is of great interest as marking the rise of the political value of industry.

From this rapid summary of the Indian tribal structure, the details of which run into the minutiae of each subdivision of the gentes, and control even the cut of the children's hair, it can be seen that the child from infancy is trained in the mythology of his tribe and gens. His father's tent is always in a given place in the tribal circle; his name and the taboo-objects constantly remind him of the strange power that has intimate relation with his life; while his own queerly decorated poll, and the heads of his kindred playmates, so fix the symbol of this mystery in his mind that he can never forget where he and his kin belong in the tribe, nor escape from the thralldom of his tribal beliefs. Thus, when we retrace our steps in the line of social development, instead of going back to an unrestrained state of nature, about which the philosophers of the eighteenth century loved to discourse, we are returning to elaborate ceremonies, to forms which become more and more fixed, and to the loss of individual liberty; freedom being the product of civilization, evolved through the centuries by the slow progress of ideas.

In the perspective furnished by the study of our Indian tribes we see in true proportions the efforts and attainments of man in the past toward the development of social order, and, standing in the broadened light, with clearer knowledge of what is behind us, we can better understand the social problems of our day.

¹ See THE CENTURY MAGAZINE for January, 1893, Vol. XLV, p. 441.