

## Witch-Scarers.

[From Photographs by the Rev. John W. Sanborn, Smethport, Pa.]



**B**HIND the remarkable mask shown on this page rests the calm face of a dignified New York Indian. His militant attitude and terrorizing front would make one think that he was going to visit his mother-in-law ; but, as a matter of fact, he is simply taking the first step in a fearless attack upon a horde of witches, who are supposed to be congregated around the peaceful "corn-pounder" at the right of the second picture.

"Corn-pounders," be it known, are the hollowed blocks in which these Indians crush their corn, or maize. And witches are malignant spirits, supposed, by the Indians, to have come into their midst for the express purpose of causing commotion in quiet households, and stirring things up generally. According to the prevalent belief, even amongst the Indians who are educated, the witches come not single spies, but in battalions. They take possession of houses, stables, and wood-piles. They get into food and clothing. They keep the wood from burning and bother the cows. They play havoc with meat and potatoes and all other delicacies in the family meal. In short, the witches are a nuisance, and make home life unbearable.

Vol. xiii.—99.

Now, no peace-loving Indian will stand such goings-on. Accordingly, a clever and ever-successful plan has been adopted by these pestered mortals for scaring away the witches. The operation takes place in the early winter, after a fall of snow. The fearless man who undertakes it quickly adorns himself in manner wonderful to behold. He snatches up the first thing he sees, fastens a

woman's skirt around his waist, gathers the folds about his knees, as shown in the first cut, and then slips on a highly-coloured waist. He then puts on his mask—an interesting bit of make-up, to be explained in detail further on—catches up a rattle made of the neck and shell of a huge snapping turtle, and seizing the pestle with which the corn is pounded, sallies forth and challenges the witches.

The advance toward the pounder is now made with the greatest caution, and yet, odd to say, with the greatest amount

of noise. The man throws his pestle at the pounder, aiming just beyond it, in order that, when the pestle falls, one end of it shall stand on the snow and the other on the edge of the block. He now takes up another pestle and a sifting-basket, and, as he nears the pounder, shakes his rattle with the utmost vigour of which he is capable. The possibilities of



THE WITCH-SCARER CHALLENGING THE WITCHES WITH RATTLE AND PESTLE.





THE ATTACK ON THE WITCHES.

a mere turtle-shell for raising pandemonium are many, and no one better knows how to make use of them than an Onondaga Indian. Our second picture shows him with the rattle in his hand, nearing the witches with cautious and gigantic stride.

It is a brave witch who can stand such an onslaught as this, and as witches are proverbially cowardly when directly attacked, the onslaught is invariably successful. The expulsion of the hated spirits is signaled by a series of war-whoops and yells, to which the noise of the rattle is as the southing of fairy zephyrs through the trees. When all the witches are frightened into the air, and the victory is complete, the conqueror takes up his position beside the corn-pounder, as shown in our third picture, and, for a moment,

rests from his vociferous exertions.

In a few seconds the man retires, and a buxom Indian woman, with resolution in her face, comes out, and takes her place at the pounder. Her dress is after the Indian pattern, with silver brooches ornamenting the front. She also wears beaded leggings of broadcloth. She first puts the pestles and sifting-baskets in their proper positions, and then proceeds to pound the corn. The witches are gone, and she does not fear their further molestation.

The New York Indians, one of whose customs is thus described, are the remnants of the Iroquois, who, in the early days of American history, were the most powerful confederation of Indians on the continent. The Iroquois were originally composed of five tribes, known as Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas,



VICTORY OVER THE WITCHES.





.....AFTER THE CONQUEST—INDIAN WOMAN AT THE CORN-POUNDER.

Senecas, and Cayugas. Later, the Tuscaroras were admitted into the league, which was then called the "Six Nations." Their home was then, as now, the central and western parts of New York State. In the war of the American Revolution they fought on the side of the English, and in the long series of battles their power was almost destroyed. They originally numbered about 12,000, but are now scattered throughout the Government reserva-

tions, about 5,000 only now remaining in New York.

Unlike the Sioux and Apaches of the west and south-west, the New York Indians are peaceful and civilized, following the pursuits of the whites and dressing in modern costume. They still retain, however, many of their old-time customs, and when observing them, dress in the traditional fashion befitting each ceremony. Many of the members of the tribes peddle herbs and roots for a living; and a few of the chiefs are men of wide learning. John Jones, a Seneca Indian, travels about in American dress, selling sassafras root for a livelihood. Chief Daniel La Fort, an Onondaga, and descendant of Hiawatha, is the President of the Iroquois Confederacy. He is a prosperous farmer, and speaks the six different languages of the "Six Nations."

Among other virtues which might well be emulated by superior mortals, these Indians possess one quality which makes them much beloved and respected. They never pry into anyone else's business. They much resent and detest inquisitiveness. Accordingly, with a humour all their own, they

have manufactured a burlesque mask of a "nosey" man, which is here reproduced. It tells its own story. It is made of cloth and turkey feathers. The nose is stuffed with pieces of cloth, and is solid enough to push into many things that it touches. The mouth, it may be noticed, has an inquisitive twist, and the eyes are contracted in the fashion peculiar to Paul Pry. It may also be noted that the man in the cotton mask wears a deer-skin coat of a salmon colour, tanned in



BURLESQUE MASK USED BY THE NEW YORK INDIANS TO REPRESENT AN INQUISITIVE MAN.

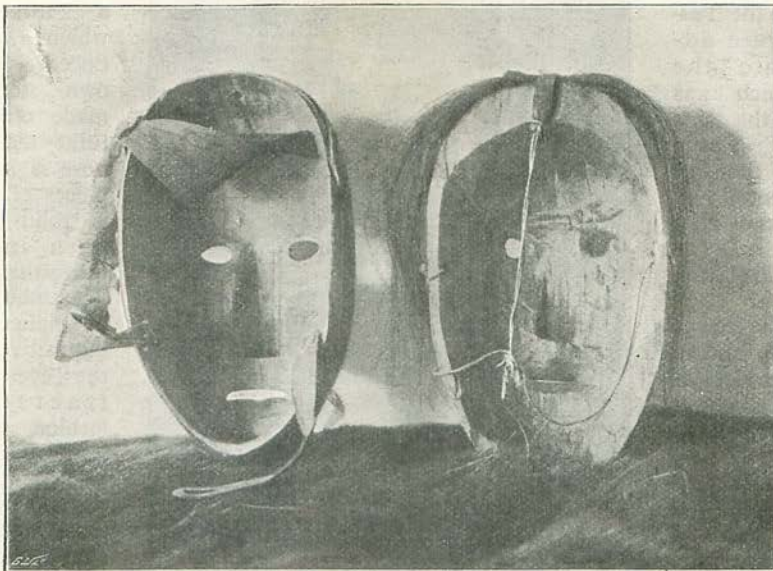


FRONT VIEW OF TWO WOODEN MASKS USED BY THE WITCH-SCARERS—CARVED WITH KNIVES.

smoke. The pride of an Indian heart, next to a good dog, is a coat of genuine buckskin.

When an Indian is ill, the "medicine man" is called in to effect a cure. The witch-scarers, in fact, are the medicine men of the tribes, and their theory of disease is that any portion of the body which is affected has been clutched by an evil spirit. The first step towards a cure is made by attacking the evil spirit with

war-whoops and rattles, and when the spirit is frightened away the patient is on the fair road to recovery. There is a beautiful simplicity about this theory, and among the tribes a delightful absence of doctors' bills. The masks, rattles, and war-whoops are the permanent property of the tribes, and the masks especially are treasured with reverential care. They are, moreover, rarely shown to the whites, and it was only through the kindness of the Rev. John



BACK VIEW OF MASKS—SHOWING STRINGS BY WHICH THEY ARE TIED ON.



Wentworth Sanborn, of Smethport, Pennsylvania, that we were enabled to obtain photographs of these curious masks. Mr. Sanborn, by virtue of his great experience among the New York Indians, and his personal acquaintance with the greater part of the 5,000 members of the various tribes, was appointed official director-in-chief of the New York Indian exhibit at the Columbian Exposition of 1893, and was adopted into the Seneca tribe and inaugurated as its chief by the Indians themselves.

The reverse side of these two masks is also shown, the strap and strings by which they are held in place on the head being plainly illustrated.

The large mask shown on this page—a rare piece of workmanship—has seldom been exhibited to white men, and has never before been reproduced in a magazine. Mr. Sanborn, the only person who has been allowed to photograph it, says that it is the joint property of ten medicine men, and was made of wood by the Seneca Indians. The hair on either



RARE WOODEN MASK, WORN BY WITCH-SCARERS—THE JOINT PROPERTY OF TEN MEDICINE MEN.

The masks on the preceding page are reproduced from photographs made especially for us by Mr. Sanborn. Both are the work of Senecas, cut from solid blocks of so-called "cucumber" wood. The mask at the left shows skilful carving, and that at the right bears upon its chin the marks of the knife used in whittling it into shape. On one of the masks a fragment of buffalo-skin has been tacked to serve as a moustache. The eyes, as usual, are made of tin, and the hair is the mane of a horse.

side of the face is the full tail of a horse. On the brow we may note two small bags. These are filled with Indian tobacco, which is sprinkled on the fire whenever the mask is used. In the right hand is the turtle-shell rattle already described, and in the left hand is the Indian "tom-tom" or drum. Both drum and rattle, as has been said, are supposed to aid the mask in frightening the bad spirits away and leaving the patient to get well. The shiny rings around the eyes are made of tin.