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SOME MEMORIES, ETC.

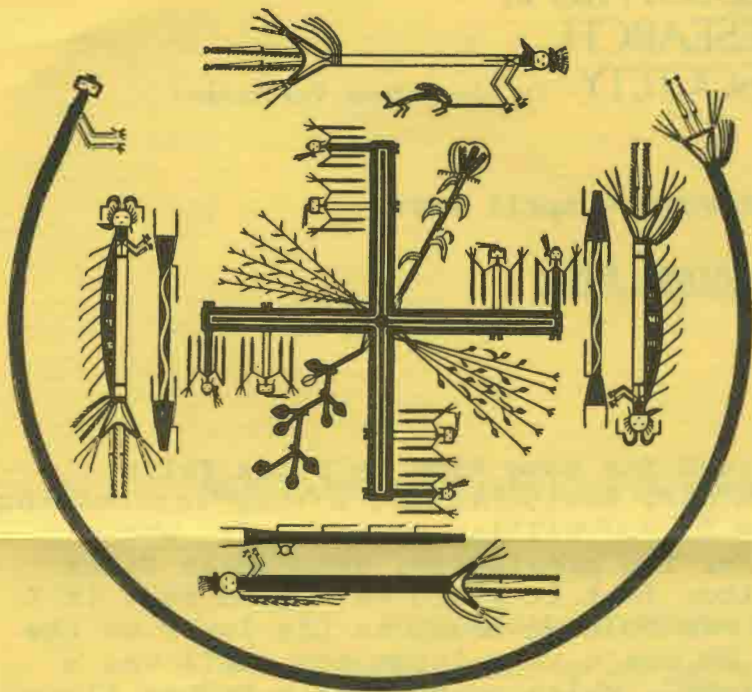
DEAR FRIENDS:



s a small boy I lived for some time in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, which was, incidentally, a very interesting community in those days. William Howard Taft, who was then campaigning for the presidency, stopped in Sioux Falls and grandmother felt it would be a good idea if I met Mr. Taft. He was holding court in the lobby of the principal hotel. He was a very large man and I was a very small boy. He wore a starched, white vest under a Prince Albert coat. Grandmother pushed me in the proper direction and the great man leaned over, patted me on the head, and shook hands warmly. It was in Sioux Falls also that the Grand Army of the Republic held its annual encampment. There was a procession through the main street led by General Howard, riding on a spirited horse. In those days many Civil War veterans were in the line of march followed by carriages for those who could not walk in line. It was in Sioux Falls that I saw my first motion picture show. In those days carnivals were held on the main streets of the city. There were tents and concessions and the principal center of interest was the cinema. The admission was five cents and needless to say there was always a full house. At one end of the tent was a three-dimensional model of Mt. Vesuvius and the Bay of Naples set in a massive gold frame. The film which lasted only three or four minutes was devoted to an eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. I remember that the film, after passing through the camera, fell into a large wicker basket and had to be rewound by hand. The screen was then removed and with the aid of small fireworks the model city in its heavy frame was demolished by an eruption of the famous mountain.

It was also my privilege to be present at the dedication of the first streetcar line. It was a single track serviced by two cars. A by-pass was included so that the cars could go by each other at the mid-point of the run. Bands played furiously, public officials made extensive speeches, the public cheered wildly, and grandmother made sure I had a seat on the first run. The conductors of the streetcar were amiable fellows and frequently picked up mail, small packages, and groceries along the way.

Circuses were major events with long parades through the main streets, and I especially remember Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. Colonel Cody was a colorful character dressed in a fringed buckskin suit and his long hair hanging on his shoulders. The tent in which his performances were given was open in the center to allow for target shooting. Cody



From an original drawing by Hasteen Klah.

NAVAHO SAND PAINTING.

main street on their ponies and occasionally, to keep in practice, shot out a few street lights. Grandmother had a fondness for Indians and we used to walk about watching their games, dances, and other tribal ceremonies. One day I came face to face with the largest Indian I have ever seen. He was an elderly man in full native regalia, and hanging around his neck was a large gold medal which had been presented to him as a gift from one of the presidents of the United States. The medal fascinated me, and suddenly the old Indian leaned over and picked me up so that I could get a better view. He spoke considerable English, and we struck up a deep and enduring friendship. The following year he brought me a bow and several arrows. We found a quiet spot behind the courthouse and he gave me lessons in archery--Indian style. The Plains Indians use a short bow and shoot from horseback. Sighting is mostly a matter of calculation, therefore entirely different from the style of the English longbow. Incidentally, it was from this Indian friend that I secured the information which many years later I used in my story "The Last of the Shamans" (See The Ways of the Lonely Ones).

The healing methods practiced by various Indian tribes have interested me for many years. These were in the keeping of medicine priests, but the term "medicine" had a very special meaning. These wise men not only protected the health of the tribes but served as counselors and custodians of the tribal lore. Most of them were natural psychics and in their vigils communicated with the deities and the noble ancestors who had departed into the spirit world. They were called to their labors by the visions that came to them in their meditations. The medicine priests were the protectors of their people. By a kind of second sight they knew when enemies were approaching and they told the hunters where to go in search of food. They arbitrated tribal disputes, and like the priests of other faiths their costumes combined male and female attire. They took no part in war and sought to arbitrate the dissensions of their people.

was famous as a marksman, but in later years he used shotgun shells to be sure that he never missed the target.

For a small boy American Indians have special attractions. Sioux Falls was the center where many of the tribes assembled annually to take up various problems or disputes with representatives of the Great White Father. They came in by the hundreds, pitched tepees in every vacant lot including the front lawn of the court-.. house. Shopkeepers were busy servicing Indian buyers, and before they left there was not a package of aniline dyes left in the community. Some young braves rode down the

I have talked to a number of these venerable protectors of the common good. They knew the herbs used in the treatment of the sick and were skilled physiotherapists. They knew how to treat the wounds of battle and the frequent accidents such as dislocations and broken bones. For the most part these medicine priests were self-taught and depended largely upon the wisdom of the "olds" and the "trues"--the great ones who dwelt together in the great medicine lodge in the sky. The foundation of their therapy was the sweat lodge, a special room set aside where the sick were placed surrounded by hot stones that brought profuse perspiration. They also administered emetics and purgatives to cleanse the body of impurities. They could perform minor surgery, and in many cases these simple and natural remedies were sufficient. If the patient did not improve spiritual healing was indicated. The medicine priests were proficient in mesmerism and hypnotic arts. They made use of chants, ritualistic dances, and a variety of fetishes and sacred symbols. They invoked the healing spirits of the tribal guardians and the final outcome of sickness was in the keeping of the divine powers. If a patient died, the medicine priest entered a kind of trance in which his soul separated from the body and he accompanied the deceased person into the afterlife.

Among the Southwest American Indians sandpaintings were used in the healing ceremony. There were different paintings appropriate to the needs of the sick. I asked one of the most venerated of the Navaho medicine priests what would happen if, in spite of all the healing rites, the patient died? Would this interfere with the reputation which he enjoyed among his people? Through an interpreter he answered quietly, "I do not know what would happen because none of those for whom I have performed the rites have died."

The sandpaintings used in the healing ceremonies have descended from ancient times. Originally, none of them was preserved. Many years ago one of the most famous of the Navaho sandpainting priests was my guest for several weeks in Los Angeles. He was so important in the Indian community that the Indian agent came up with him to see that he was constantly attended. In my next letter I will describe in greater detail my experiences with this venerable medicine priest.

Always with kindest regards I am most sincerely yours,

Marilyn P. Hall

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