

Young People's Department.

INDIAN "MEDICINE MEN."

BY REV. W. A. BURMAN.

(Continued.)

IN a former article we described the methods of education and initiation of the red Indian medicine man. We now pass on to consider him as a *doctor*. As might be expected it is here the climax of his power and importance is reached; for sickness is seldom absent from the camp, and only the duly qualified doctor can be trusted to cope with it. A messenger is sent to him carrying a present or promising great things if the sick person is cured. The doctor prepares himself very deliberately. Sometimes he fasts for a day or two, and almost invariably takes a vapour bath or *inipi*. This is done by making a very small tent of blankets over tent willows. Within this the doctor crouches, while his assistants roll in to him hot stones, upon which a small piece of tobacco is sometimes burnt. Water is then thrown upon them until the doctor is almost overcome with the steam. Meanwhile he and his confederates have been chanting prayers and using their rattles in order to attract the attention of the evil spirits. The purification ended the doctor is ready to begin operations. Carrying his sacred rattle, a few roots and other native medicines—with perhaps the bowl used only at the



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medicine feast, he proceeds to the sick man's tipi. Our illustration shows him at work there trying to drive out the evil spirit supposed to be the cause of all the mischief. Left alone with the patient, the doctor throws off his own clothes, and begins his incantations. He mutters his prayers, or sings wild chants in unearthly tones, at the same time using his rattle constantly, until he works himself up to a perfect frenzy, sometimes real, sometimes pretended. At last the climax is reached. Acting more like a madman than a sane being he throws himself upon the ground, writhes about as though in convulsions, and at

length applies his mouth to the seat of pain, or to the part of the patient's body supposed to be affected, and sucks as though to draw out the evil spirit. After a time he pretends this has been done, and acts like one possessed with a legion of devils. With mingled cries of pain, triumph and spiritual anguish he throws himself about, and at last, thrusting his mouth into a bowl of water, with much bubbling and gurgling he pretends to eject the spirit into it. All this time the rattle is kept going incessantly. These rattles, which play such an important part in the exorcisms of the Indian are made in various ways. When it can be

obtained a small gourd with a hard rind is in request. This is sometimes covered with leather as in the picture. Very frequently, however, a tin canister is now used—a piece of wood being passed quite through top and bottom and made to serve as a handle. The rattling may be caused by a number of any hard objects, but the rattles most valued have within them peculiar small bones taken from the head of the sunfish. The rattle is one of the medicine man's insignia of office and stock in trade. When spite of all his efforts the doctor loses his patient, professional etiquette requires that he should throw away his rattles and retire from practice for a year, unless, in the meantime, all other doctors in the band get into the same position of discredit. It must not be supposed, however, that the doctor relies only on

the exorcist art. He often has a fair knowledge of anatomy, and an acquaintance with the virtues of vegetable remedies, which sometimes makes him of real service. Some of their prescriptions are, however, of doubtful value, while others are almost as gruesome as the contents of the cauldron of Macbeth's witches. Strong decoctions of the poisonous root of the false Indian hemp, *Apocynumcannabinum*, are often given. Another mixture is composed of an infusion of anemone leaves—a fragment of the root of the sweet flag, the leaves of a wild cherry and a little gunpowder with other ingredients. This is given thrice daily