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Not Extraordinary

A famous Scots colonel tells the following story in his reminiscences:

A young subaltern of his own nationality was one day on guard with another officer at Gibraltar, when the latter fell over the rock and was killed. The subaltern, however, made no mention of the accident in his guard report, but left the addendum.

"Nothing extraordinary since guard-mounting," standing without qualification. Some hours afterwards the bri-

gade general came to demand explanations.

"You say, sir, in your report, 'Nothing extraordinary since guard-mounting,' when your own fellow officer has fallen down a rocky precipice four hundred feet deep, and has been killed."

"Well, general," replied the young subaltern slowly, "I dinna think there's anything extraordinary in that. If he had faun doon a precipice four hundred feet deep and not been killed, I should ha' thoct it extraordinary, and put it doon in ma report."



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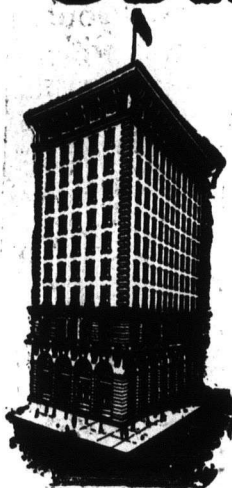
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Indian Dances

By Max. McD.

WHEN Columbus landed in the New World in 1492, he was greeted with a dance. It was a war dance executed by the Red men. The Indian has never broken away from this early custom, and to-day we find great occasions celebrated in a manner similar to that first demonstration to the White man.

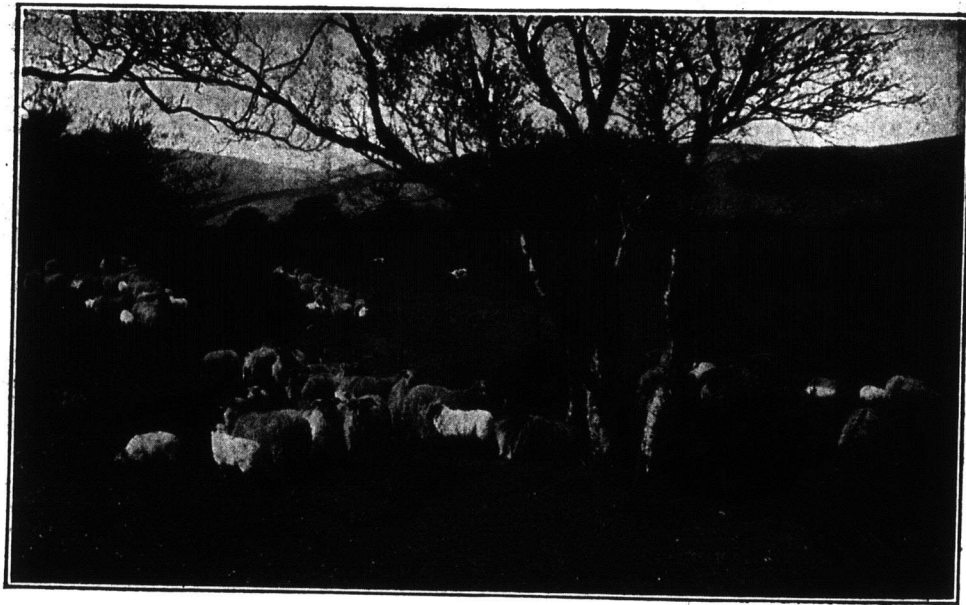
In the minds of many people, all the dances of the North American Indians are war dances. As a matter of fact there are numerous dances, extremely interesting and most of them very old. Women as well as men participate in them and they have nothing to do with warfare. Strange to say, in none of these Indian dances is there contact between the sexes. The bucks dance in one circle and the squaws in another. Few dances are wholly social, although some of them have that element. Practically all of them have a religious origin and to-day retain their religious significance.

Indians are very musical and have many songs in their own language. The drum seems to be the principal instrument among them; but when they have opportunity they learn the White man's music and the use of his instruments very quickly, rendering the most difficult music with great sweetness. On the Blood Reserve of the Blackfoot tribe in Alberta there is a brass band of twenty-one pieces led by the issuer of rations, that gives concerts in the towns

The dance was the ceremony through which the Indian lad stepped from boyhood to the status of a warrior. It is too horrible for words. Ugly gashes are cut in the chest, skewers are thrust through these, and rawhide lariats attached to the ends and fastened to the sun lodge pole. The youth must tear himself loose by dancing around the pole and tugging until the strips of flesh to which the thongs are fastened give way. If the aspirant passed through the ordeal without exhibiting signs of pain or fear, he was declared a full-fledged brave and eligible to sit in the councils of his nation.

Another method was to cut the flesh on the back and tie leather thongs through these flesh loops and then fasten buffalo skulls to the thongs so that they would dangle clear of the ground. The candidate was to dance about till he had succeeded in tearing the loops and allowing the skulls to fall to the ground. This method was not as popular as the other because the brave could not afterward see the marks of the ordeal. It was always a great pleasure to the brave to bare his breast and exhibit the scars made by the tearing process.

Indian mothers were as anxious that their sons should go through the ordeal as they were themselves. An incident is told by a Western writer which shows how the Indian mother looked upon it. An Indian lad was being put through the buffalo skull method, but his strength



A hardy black faced flock in shady pasture

surrounding the reserve. Another band of fives and drums on the same reserve has given whole entertainments that were very pleasing.

The Red men have war songs which they used to sing before a battle; others, intensely sad, which they sang after the battle. Their love songs are not considered of a very high order. Each family has its own songs; each individual has his, usually composed by himself. Some of their songs are sacred.

Some teachers, in their mistaken zeal, have crossed or smothered everything distinctly aboriginal in the young Indians. Franklin K. Lane, the Canadian-born secretary of the United States Department of the Interior, in a letter directing the appointment of Geoffrey O'Hara as instructor of native Indian music, said:

"I think that it is the part of wisdom to develop in the young Indian an increased respect for all those things of beauty which their forefathers produced. Our efforts should be to make this generation proud of their ancestors and keep alive in them the memory of their wholesome legends and their aboriginal arts."

Music for dances is supplied by a trained band of singers. The only accompaniment is a drum made by putting a skin over a circle of wood and allowing it to dry tightly.

The sun-dance is, perhaps, the most barbarous of all the orgies of the Indians and has been observed in every known tribe of Red men on the American continent. The time was when all sorts of cruelties were the main feature of this gathering, which was held in the spring-time as soon as the snow cleared and the earth began to warm from the sun's rays.

was not enough to tear out all the flesh loops. He was about to faint away when his mother rode into the circle on a pony and seizing the skull that still clung to the back of her son, she dashed away on the horse, dragging the boy with her. Soon the flesh broke and the young Indian boy was saved from the humility of failure.

Before the ordeal comes many back out. Sometimes, after the thongs or skewers are put in, the victim loses courage. The wood or buffalo hide must then be removed by cutting the flesh loop, since it is against all law to draw it out endwise after it has been inserted in the flesh.

The United States government has long since forbidden the sun-dance, but it was continued on Canadian reserves till the coming of the Royal North-West Mounted Police about 1890. As a consequence the annual gathering of the Indians in the spring-time results in nothing more than dancing the old-time dances, chanting the brave acts of bygone days, and propitiating the sun by the bestowal of gifts which are fastened to the top of the central pole of the sun-dance lodge.

The give-away dance is ranked by the government authorities with the sun-dance as very demoralizing, and has been stopped on most reserves. The round dance of the Crees in Western Canada is a pleasure dance. Women are allowed to take part in it, but before their first dance they must give a substantial present to the leader of the dance. This present seems to make the person a sort of life member of the round dance. Squaws and bucks dance separately without any contact.