

death itself, are thus accounted for, all being controlled by the medicine-men. A person dies, not from natural causes, but because it is the pleasure of some one of this all-powerfull class that he should die, and because he has been unable to find another one powerful enough to counteract his "medicine."

In order to communicate with the spirits, the medicine-man must have a special kind of wigwam or retreat erected. This is done by planting a number of nicely trimmed poles in the ground in the form of a circle about five or six feet in diameter. They are fixed in the erect position by being firmly bound together by hoops at intervals, with a crowning one at the top. The poles are lashed to the hoops with spruce roots or other fastenings. This frame is securely enclosed with bark all the way up, so that no one can peep in, even if disposed to do so, which, however, is never attempted. The medicine-man then gets inside and fastens up the opening. He mutters and sings at intervals, and then maintains a perfect silence. Suddenly the medicine wigwam is violently shaken, after which it is announced that the spirits have arrived and he is ready to answer questions. I have been present on some of these occasions. A question must generally be accompanied by a fee, such as a plug of tobacco or a box of matches. The answers are given in a deep sepulchral voice, and are sometimes direct and positive, but oftener ambiguous, and, in the latter case, great ingenuity is sometimes shown in constructing an answer which will be verified, whichever way events may happen. Or instead of giving any answer, the attention of the audience (which is squatted around the wigwam) may be diverted from the main point of the interrogation by some poetic or entertaining "yarn." When fairly cornered the medicine-man will say the spirit refuses to answer, is offended or has just left for the day, his presence being suddenly required elsewhere. Of course, with experience and intelligence in his favor, the chances are more than even that his predictions will be fulfilled, and great stress is laid on every hit, while the failures are easily forgotten. In this way, even superstitious white servants of the Hudson's Bay Company and others come to have a certain faith in these conjurers. The practices of the Indian