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The Sacrificial Rite of the Blackfoot.

By

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*To
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I.—*The Sacrificial Rite of the Blackfoot.*

By R. N. WILSON.

(Communicated by DUNCAN C. SCOTT, and read May 26, 1908.)

The Indians here referred to as the Blackfoot are the Bloods, Peigans and Blackfoot in the Province of Alberta, three kindred tribes speaking a single language which, collectively, are known as the Blackfoot nation, and as such form one of the widely dispersed branches of the Algonkian linguistic stock of the American race.

The people of the Blackfoot tribes believe that after death the spirit of an Indian pursues an aimless, endless, and totally uninteresting career in a ghost land which they locate in the Great Sand Hills near the eastern border of the Blackfoot territory.

They think that while the ghosts of a few individuals may wander about among the living, with whom they have little or no means of communication, the majority are gathered at the Sand Hills, and that there is nothing of the nature of reward or punishment in connection with that existence in the land of spirits.

Fearing nothing and hoping for nothing beyond the grave, the whole concern of the religious Blackfoot is with the affairs of this material life.

Old age, then, is the greatest favour that he can receive, and if to this be added such pleasures as those arising from wealth, popularity, success in war, freedom from bodily ailments and family bereavements, he desires nothing more.

He knows, however, that the few live to a great age and the many die young. Some people are wealthy and others are poor. One man rears to maturity a large family, while other parents do not succeed in preserving a single child. He reasons that all of these blessings are, therefore, subject to influences not controlled by himself, and as he is inclined to revere that which is beyond his understanding, he thinks that in the powers of nature he recognises the masters of his destiny.

The result is a pantheon of nature gods and a somewhat complicated system of theology, which if faithfully explained in all of its ramifications, would present a complete exposition of Blackfoot thought, so extensively does religion enter into the affairs of everyday life.

Of the numerous objects of worship, the Sun is the one which receives the greatest adoration. More prayers are addressed to this principal deity than to all the others combined, and the most important of the religious rites and ceremonies are devoted to him in particular.

In the neighbourhood of Indian camps and reservations, a familiar sight is an article of clothing such as a coat, shirt, or blanket, attached to a stick and placed in a conspicuous position, generally on the top of a high hill, on the edge of a cliff, or tied to the trunk of a prominent tree.

These are sacrificial offerings to the Sun, which in former times consisted of the rarest and most highly valued articles possessed by the Indians; notably the skins of the two exceedingly rare specimens of the bison commonly known as the "white buffalo" and the "silk robe,"—the latter being called by the Blackfoot the "beaver hair,"—the skins of the otter and ermine, of the fawns of various deer, and the tail feathers of the eagle. Richly ornamented war clothing of all kinds and numbers of other things were proper for sacrificial purposes, the rule seeming to have been that the more scarce and valuable the article, the greater reason why the Indian should give it to the Sun.

As nearly all such treasures have now become things of the past, in their stead the people sacrifice, for the most part, clothing, coloured cloth, and other articles of white manufacture; although a skin of some sort is occasionally to be seen exposed.

Sometimes, acting under the force of circumstances, an Indian prepares his offering, carries it to a hill, and, uttering a prayer, erects it without further ceremony.

There is, however, a particular rite connected with the making of such sacrifices, and its description is the object of this contribution.

Of the many propitiatory ceremonies of solar worship practised under the observation of the writer during an association with these Indians extending back to the year 1881 the sacrificial rite has been chosen as the subject of the present paper because it includes within convenient limits such a large number of the typical features of Blackfoot ritual that its description will present something more than a superficial view of the sacred practices and beliefs of these people.

When an old Blackfoot is asked why such rites are practised in honour of the Sun, he replies, "because Scarface taught us so," referring to a mythological personage of that name. It will, therefore, not be inappropriate to first consider the myth.

MYTHICAL ORIGIN.

The Legend of Scarface. In the mythology of the Blackfoot there is a story called Uk-ski,—meaning "scar on the face,"—which is believed by them to explain the origin of their principal sacred ceremonies and beliefs.

So much ritual has reference to this myth, and so many observances are founded upon it, that the student of Indian religious thought may accept it as one of the most significant and instructive legends possessed by the Blackfoot tribes.

The following is the Blood version as translated from the Blackfoot by the writer in 1890. In the translation of the myth the Indian mode of expression has been adhered to as strictly as possible.

Long, long ago there lived a very beautiful young Indian woman who declined to marry. Her parents tried to persuade her to choose of the many marriageable young men in the tribe, but without success. Chiefs sent their relatives to her family with proposals of marriage, and many wealthy people desired her for their sons, but she would have nothing to do with any of them.

Among the many who wanted this girl was a young man who had a bad scar on his face which made him appear ugly. Three times she refused him, as she had refused every one else, but at a fourth request she made this reply, "Many chiefs have wanted to marry me, many rich and handsome men, and I have said no to them all. I will marry you when that scar disappears from your face."

After hearing the words of the young woman, Scarface's heart was on the ground. In great distress he went away out on the prairie, far from the camp, to fast for several days and dream, thinking that the dream person might tell him how to get rid of the scar. He was very anxious to marry the girl.

One night he slept near a large stone and in his sleep the stone said to him, "The Sun can cure you. Go away far to the east, to the place that he rises from in the morning and there you will find his lodge." Scarface thought that this advice was good and at once determined to follow it. He went home, procured a large number of moccasins, packed a bag of food, and started on his long journey. How long he travelled we do not know. It was many days, and always in the direction of the rising Sun.

He met many people who asked him why he was so far from home. To some he replied that it was to get rid of his scar that he had gone so far from home. To others he said, "It is because of a woman that I travel." He inquired of every one the whereabouts of the Sun's home. They all pointed to the east and said that it was in that direction.

Scarface was assisted on his journey by four different mysterious beings who spoke to him in his dreams and encouraged him to keep on towards the rising Sun. The fourth and last of these told him, one night when he was sleeping, to cover up his eyes and not look until told.

Scarface obeyed and was soon told to open his eyes and look in front of him, towards the east. He looked and saw in the distance a lodge and a boy outside it. "That lodge," said the dream person, "is the home of the Sun, and the boy standing outside is his son the Morning Star, now go close."

Scarface awakened early the next morning and continued his journey. It was not long before he saw in the distance the lodge he had seen in his dream, and when he came nearer he met the boy who asked him who he was and why he travelled. Scarface told the story of his trouble.

The Morning Star took pity on the Indian and promised to help him.

The Sun's son was dressed in the best clothes that Scarface had ever seen. A rare buffalo calf robe was on his shoulders, and his leggings and shirt were of the finest make.

As they approached the lodge someone called from within, "Go away from here, how you stink. You smell like people." It was the Moon, the Sun's wife, who was speaking, so her son the Morning Star went in and explained that it was only his new friend Scarface, and that he wanted to come in.

The mother said, "Wait, let me make incense." Scarface heard her singing while she made incense with sweet grass. He then entered the lodge.

Presently they heard someone approaching, shouting "How our home stinks. It smells like people." The boy went out and told the newcomer, who was his father, the Sun, "It is only my new friend, Scarface, that you smell."

"Then make incense. Make incense and I will enter," cried the Sun. After incense had been made as before he entered.

Morning Star and his mother explained how Scarface had just arrived, and the Sun remarked, "It does not matter. Let him remain, he will be a companion for our son."

Scarface now looked about, and was surprised to see a great quantity of Indian property in the lodge. White buffalo robes were there in abundance. Beaver hair buffalo robes, otter skins, ermine, eagle tail feathers, and all things that Indians love to possess were piled up in the lodge on all sides. Some of these things were old, but most of them were new. War garments of all kinds, scalp shirts and leggings, in fact, all Indian treasures were there in great numbers.

Said the Sun to Scarface, "Take off your clothing, my son. Your garments smell of people, so take them all off and throw them outside." Scarface did as he was told.

"My son, why did you come here? Why do you travel?" inquired the Sun.

Scarface told him that he travelled because of a woman's promise, and he again related the story of his trouble.

"It is not difficult. It is not difficult," said the Sun. "Go you Scarface, and make me four sweat lodges. Build them in a row from east to west. Paint the northern half of each sweat lodge black, and the southern half red. Place a buffalo skull on the top of each sweat lodge when it is complete, and dig a square hole in the centre of each, to receive the stones. You, Morning Star, go and help your friend Scarface build the sweat lodges as I have instructed."

The boys did exactly as they had been told, and when all four were finished the Sun's wife heated the stones.

The stones being now hot and the sweat lodges covered over, the Sun, Scarface, and Morning Star entered the most eastern one by the hole in that end, and going by the south side, sat down at the west end. The Sun sat in the middle, facing the centre of the sweat lodge, with a boy on each side of him.

The Moon handed in a coal of fire, which her husband placed on the ground at the west side of the square hole in the sweat lodge in which he was sitting. Another coal was put at the east side and incense was made on them both at the same time.

Next, the Moon took a small hot stone from the fire outside and, carrying it on a stick, carefully placed it in the southeast corner of the square hole in the sweat lodge. A second similar stone she deposited at the southwest corner, after passing it over the first stone. A third and fourth were put down. A large stone, hot like all the others, was now laid in the middle of the hole and incense was dropped on them all.

The Moon handed to her husband, the Sun, his pipe, and all three in the sweat lodge smoked while the incense was burning.

The rest of the hot stones were now tumbled into the shallow hole, and, after the Moon had handed in a bowl of water, the hides covering the sweat lodge were all drawn together so that it became quite dark inside.

Singing his songs, the Sun put a little water on the stones, causing a dense steam, and his wife from the outside, at his request, lifted a portion of the cover at the east end. He then told her to close it again and when he had made more steam asked her to open a small space in the west. Again all was made dark, more water was applied to the stones and the same performance was repeated at each end of the sweat lodge, making four times that light had been let in.

The Sun completed his songs, after which they all went outside, and when Scarface's face was examined it was seen that the scar was not so plain as it had been.

They entered the second sweat lodge and went through the same ceremony as before. Upon coming out, the scar was found to have been nearly removed.

The third sweat lodge was entered and used as the others had been, with the result that the scar could barely be seen.

After they had finished with the fourth, the Sun made Scarface and the Morning Star change places. Then when his wife had removed the hides from the sweat lodge, he said "Which is your son?" She pointed to Scarface saying "That is our son."

The boy's face was so completely healed that he looked just like the handsome Morning Star. Scarface was much pleased.

Said the Sun "You will not return home soon, my son, you will remain here until next summer, because there are many things I want to tell you. I am going to instruct you."

They gave the young Indian a full suit of the best clothing they had. He remained a long time at the home of the Sun, receiving instruction from him and going about much with his friend, the Morning Star.

One day when the two boys were roaming about together shooting, they saw some large birds which the Morning Star said were very dangerous birds, and that they always killed anyone who went shooting with him.

He wanted Scarface to run home with him to avoid the birds, but the Indian saw that the birds were harmless ones which were always killed and eaten in his country.

The Morning Star retreated. The birds flew at Scarface who raised his bow and using it as a club, knocked a bird on the head killing it. He did the same thing to three others and took the dead birds home to the Sun's lodge. Three of the birds he left outside the lodge and entered with one in his hand.

He received great praise for killing the bird, but when he after a while told them that three more were lying dead outside, they said that he was a very brave young man.

The Sun gave to Scarface the Morning Star's shirt which was decorated with scalp hair, telling him, "This is the garment that brave men wear."

The Sun took charcoal and grease and blacked the young man's face, put a white buffalo robe on his back and tied feathers in his hair.

During all the time that Scarface was at the Sun's lodge he had been receiving instruction on many religious ceremonies, the most important of which was Okan, the "Sun-dance."

The Sun had said to him "Let no foolish (immoral) woman make Okan, I will not pay any attention to her prayers. I will only hear the prayers of wise (virtuous) women. Remember the things I like best. Beaver hair buffalo robes, white buffalo robes, war clothing, eagle tail feathers, and all good and pretty things. Tell the people that when prayers are accompanied by these things, they will be granted. Also remember that my favourite food is the tongue of the buffalo."

The time came when the Indian was to return home, so one day the Sun lifted a big stone near the lodge, and called to Scarface, "Come and look into this hole."

The boy looked into the hole which the stone had covered and saw far, far below him an Indian camp.

Said the Sun "You are going to descend."

Scarface with regret parted with his friend the Morning Star, who gave him a whistle telling him to blow it whenever he wished his wife to come to him.

"Now, my son," said the Sun, "you are going down to your home, but you must close your eyes and not open them until you arrive at the bottom."

Scarface entered the hole, closed his eyes and went down, down so far that he thought something must be wrong, so opened his eyes to see, and at once found himself back at the Sun's lodge.

They started him down again after telling him that it was because he opened his eyes that he did not reach the earth.

Scarface did better that time and descended nearer to the earth, but became curious as before and found himself above again.

Again the Sun started him through the hole and Scarface kept his eyes closed for a long, long time and had almost reached the ground, but feeling sure that he must be there, he looked, only to find himself back once more with the Sun.

"You have only one more chance, young man," said the Sun. "Four times only are you allowed to try. You have blundered three times and have only one chance more. If you now look before you touch the ground you will never again see your people."

Scarface was frightened so much that he held his eyes closed with his hands. They pushed him through the hole for the last time and down he went for a very long time. He much wanted to look, but as he thought of the handsome wife he was going to have, he succeeded in keeping his eyes closed long enough.

When he reached the earth and looked about, Scarface found that he was on a hill not far from the Indian camp, his home.

Soon some people came near, who, seeing him sitting there dressed in such good clothing, called to him, inquiring "who are you? What kind of a person are you?" meaning of what tribe.

Scarface did not answer, but went to the camp and walked about amongst the people. None recognized him, but all admired his clothing and arms.

After every one had seen him and wondered who he could be, he told them that he was Scarface who left home because of a woman.

He blew on the whistle given him by his friend the Morning Star, and the girl, who was at work scraping a buffalo hide, stopped working and listened awhile, but soon went on scraping.

Scarface sounded the whistle a second time at which the girl turned from her work and came toward him, but she did not walk far before she stopped, returned to her buffalo hide and continued her work.

A third time the young man blew his whistle, and again the young woman ceased working, and went in the direction of the sound. Seeing no one whom she knew, she returned as before to work.

Scarface whistled a fourth time at which the girl came quite close to him, and he said, "Long ago I asked you to marry me and you said that you would do so when the scar left my face. The scar is no longer on my face. Do as you promised."

The beautiful girl was very willing to keep her promise, as the young man was now as handsome as herself.

They were married, and Scarface taught the people all that he had learned from the Sun.

The great religious ceremonies of the Blackfoot having first been performed under the direction of Scarface, were practised every year after that, and the Sun, as he had promised, was kind to the people and heard their prayers.

Such is the legend of Scarface, as related to the writer many years ago by old men, of the Blood tribe, now passed away, whose instructors had in turn received it long before the close of the eighteenth century.

Judging from the large amount of ritualistic detail that is supposed to have originated with the journey and adventures of Scarface, the myth was probably at one time much more extensive than as now told, although there is reason to doubt that it has undergone any curtailment during the last hundred years.

The statement in the legend that the Sun, during a long period of time, evidently a year or more, gave Scarface instruction in many religious matters, is doubtless an abridgement of a more ancient account,

and in order to ascertain the extent and meaning of those sacred teachings we must examine those portions of the various rites practised, and beliefs professed by the people, in connection with which Scarface is mentioned, as the founder or otherwise.

It must not be understood that were this task completed the whole story of the Blackfoot religion would be told. Although the above myth is responsible for some of the most prominent ceremonies and most deep seated beliefs, there are other rites and superstitions which occupy a large portion of the religious Blackfoot's time and thought and which plainly show that they are of different and distinct origin.

THE CEREMONY.

Sacrificial offerings are the immediate results of various circumstances. A man may lose his horses, and, having unsuccessfully resorted to every means of finding them, becomes alarmed at their continued absence, and while praying to the Sun for the return of his animals, promises to make a sacrifice. Sometimes he makes the sacrifice conditional upon the granting of the specific request,—in which case he awaits the issue of events,—but usually the promise is free of conditions and the ceremony is held without such delay. In the old days of almost constant warfare the sacrifice would commonly follow a prayer for success against the enemy, or be the result of a war expedition in which one of the party found himself in a critical situation and promised to make an offering if he escaped. Sickness, however, has been the most frequent cause of the practice in late years. It is an act of propitiation which may arise from almost any trouble with which the Indian has to contend. Although the Blackfoot Indians worship many gods, these offerings are made to the celestial deities alone, viz:—the Sun, his wife the Moon, and their son the Morning Star.

An Indian, having promised in a prayer, to make a gift to the Sun, and the time being convenient for the fulfilment of his vow, sends a message to one of the men called "atsimaps" or "prayerful," requesting him to conduct the ceremony, and stating what payment will be made, the consideration usually being a horse.

The tribal religious ceremonies of the Blackfoot are directed by men who have made a special study of matters sacred, but who, as such, are not members of a common society or organization of any kind.

Each of them, known to the writer, is simply an individual of an extremely religious temperament, gifted with a memory capable of retaining the countless sacred tunes which are almost as essential as prayers to the various rites, and who by close attention and practice has become proficient in ceremonial affairs.

Being an acknowledged adept his services are sought by the ordinary Indian who may desire to perform some special act of religious devotion, and who is usually quite willing to pay to have it conducted properly.

The adepts will here be called priests instead of "medicine men," because the latter term is too widely applied to have any special meaning.

Blackfoot priests are seldom doctors, and when a man is found who plies both callings, the fact has no more significance than would the case of a white man being equally learned in medicine and theology. The term "medical priesthood" has been inaccurately applied to the Blackfoot, years of careful observation having failed to reveal to the writer the slightest indication of such an institution or class.

A priest having been engaged and a number of guests invited, on the morning of the appointed day,—sometimes during the preceding night,—the vow maker or devotee, who will also be referred to as the host and sacrificer, exposes his offering on the end of a long pole at the outside of his own lodge after preparing it in the following manner:—Two upper corners of the article are tied to a cross stick of green willow about an inch in diameter and long enough to spread out the offering to its greatest width. At each point where the offering is tied to this stick a bunch of the broad leaf wild sage is attached. There are two varieties of *Artemisia* very plentiful in the Blackfoot country, only one of which, *Artemisia Ludovinea*, is used for ceremonial purposes. The other variety, the *Artemisia frigida*, is considered improper for sacred uses.

The devotee next makes a light willow hoop eight or nine inches in diameter, and across it ties a number of willow sticks with their ends close together at one side of the circle but spread about two inches apart on the opposite side. Each of these latter ends is surmounted by a tail feather of the golden or war eagle (*Aquila chrysetus*). The circle is then attached to the top of the sacrifice, with the eagle feathers uppermost.

When a coat or shirt is offered, the cross stick is put through the sleeves, which are extended upon it and tied with a bunch of *Artemisia* in each wrist; the hoop and feathers being fastened to the collar of the garment.

The now properly prepared offering is elevated on the end of a spare lodge pole to the top of the vow-maker's lodge, where it remains fluttering in the wind, until it is taken down in the course of the proceedings.

The ceremony takes place in the ordinary Blackfoot lodge, which stands with entrance to the east, and in which is the common central

fireplace surrounded by a circle of stones. The sleeping places of the inmates are arranged end to end, next to the walls of the structure, leaving a clear passage entirely around the fireplace, for the convenience of moving about.

The temporary altar is built on the west side, directly opposite the entrance, and in the passage referred to. Midway between the fire and the bed in the west, a piece of the sod floor about two feet square is cleared, by cutting away the grass level with the ground, over which is then spread to the depth of about half an inch or less, some light coloured clay taken from a neighbouring cliff. In the centre of the square patch of clay thus formed a conical heap of the same material is piled to the height of six or eight inches. Along the western edge of the square of clay are placed in a row four large discs of dried cow dung,—a substitute for the buffalo “chips” of the good old days,—and on top of the row of “chips” is spread a quantity of *Artemisia*. So much of the preparation of the altar is done without ceremony and it is now ready for the beginning of proceedings. The host's pipes are produced and laid near the altar together with his tobacco board upon which he has cut up a quantity of tobacco mixed, according to the custom of these Indians, with the leaves of the bear berry, (*Arctostaphylos Uva-ursi*) artificially dried for that purpose. The following articles are also procured and placed upon the *Artemisia* for future use, viz:—three little bags containing respectively, red earth, pulverized charcoal, and yellow ochre, a braided and dried bunch of sweet grass or holy grass (*Hierochloa borealis*), a portion of the root of the “big turnip” (*Ferula dissoluta*), a small piece of fat meat, a single eagle tail feather, and a forked fire stick cut from the tree of the service berry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*) and used in all Blackfoot rites as a substitute for tongs, to convey hot coals from the lodge fire to the altar.

In the above arrangement of the altar the buffalo “chips” represent the ancient fuel of the prairie Indians. No satisfactory explanation is obtainable regarding the *Artemisia*, which is extensively used in Blackfoot ceremonial observances. The conical mound of clay is said to represent a light cloud in the sky, the sky itself being symbolised in the square patch of white clay on the ground. The *Ferula dissoluta* is a favourite root of these people who consider it “good medicine,” a drink is sometimes made from it by breaking the root into small pieces which are then boiled in water, and it is also used as incense by placing bits of it on a coal fire, causing a smoke which is inhaled by the Indians with great relish.

The guests are now arriving, each man being usually accompanied by his wife, who carries two little pans or plates, formerly wooden

bowls, for the use of herself and husband. The men seat themselves on the north side and the women occupy the south. The priest's position is at the west, facing the altar, with the vow-maker or host sitting at his right hand. All being now ready, the host's wives serve out to the assembled guests, who sometimes number more than a score, a feast consisting of beef tongues chopped in small pieces and stewed with service berries, or some other fruit according to the season or to the supply on hand. When each individual's portion of food is placed before him, the priest,—whom we shall also refer to as the ritualist,—with his fingers takes from his own dish a small piece of meat which he holds high in front of him while he prays aloud to the Sun, asking the deity to take pity on the people who have assembled to do him homage, to grant the requests that would be made of him, to favour all present with good health, to cause them to become possessed of many horses, to long continue the peaceful relations existing between Indians and white men, and to grant old age to himself, the host, and others present. At the conclusion of the prayer he lowers the bit of meat close to the ground in front of where he sits, and after saying some such words as "Here Earth Person I give this to you that the grass may grow and that there may be a continuation of all blessings which come from our mother the Earth," he pushes the piece of meat into the dirt at his feet.

Each guest now extracts a particle of food from his or her dish, and, uttering a shorter prayer than that used by the director of ceremonies, sacrifices to the Earth in the same manner by depositing it in the ground. The prayers of the guests being made simultaneously, and each one praying after his own fashion, considerable confusion of voices is the result, but an observer is able to note the peculiarities of the different orisons. Some of the less eloquent supplicants, being literally men of few words, merely mutter a single sentence containing words which signify old age, many horses, good health, and joyfulness, at which they forthwith sacrifice to the Earth deity, as described. All having thus said grace the food is disposed of in short order.

The feast being concluded, the ritualist, using the forked firestick, extracts a red coal from the fire and deposits it on the ground between the altar and the fireplace. Chanting one of the wordless sacred songs, he grasps the right wrist of the host and guides his hand to take a pinch of the sweet grass and drop it upon the coal of fire, from which an aromatic smoke soon arises and pervades the lodge. Then follow a number of songs in which signs are made referring to the instructions given by the Sun to the mythical Scarface.

The priest strips the leaves from one or more of the stalks of Artemisia on the altar, and mixing with the leaves a little of the dried sweet grass, a bit of meat, and a pinch of red earth, he rolls the whole between the palms of his hands into a ball, which he touches to the right foot of the devotee, then passes it to his hand, up the arm to the shoulder, across the back of the neck to the left shoulder, down the arm to the left hand into which he pushes the ball, telling the devotee to grasp it and to apply it to his chest and head. When this is done the ball of Artemisia leaves is handed to the person sitting on the immediate left of the priest, who receives it with both hands, and, after handling it in the same manner, passes it in turn to his left hand neighbour. The ball thus makes a complete circuit of the lodge, through the hands of all adults present, including the women; each person as he or she receives it uttering a scarcely audible prayer for personal good health, etc. When the Artemisia ball, having made the circuit, reaches the hands of the woman sitting on the immediate right of the host, the priest orders her to take it outside and throw it away. This performance has reference to the method adopted by the Sun in removing the scar from the face of the young man in the myth. The use of meat in the ball is intended to insure against starvation.

The sacrificer's wife, or some member of his household, now brings forward an ordinary stone pipe which has in the meantime been filled with the smoking mixture before mentioned. Kneeling before the priest, the person bringing the pipe presents it to him, and remaining on the knees devoutly awaits his blessing. The priest receives the pipe with both hands, one grasping the wooden stem, the other holding the stone bowl, and holding it in front of him with the mouthpiece pointing upward and forward, he prays aloud to the Sun, asking for general blessings. Turning the stem downward until the mouthpiece touches the ground in front of him, the priest concludes his prayer with a few sentences addressed to the Earth Person, and then passes the pipe to the host, who lights it with a coal from the fire, takes a few whiffs and hands it back. The priest puffs at the pipe for a moment until the smoke emits in full volume, then he blows one whiff of smoke upward to the Sun, one downward to the Earth, and after smoking a short while passes the pipe to his left hand neighbour, after which it is used by every male guest as far as the entrance of the lodge, past which it is never handed. When the smoker sitting next the entrance finishes with the pipe he gives it back to his right hand neighbour and thus it is passed back to the man on the extreme right, no one smoking it when it is going towards the right unless he be a "calumet man," the owner

of a sacred pipe who smokes in ceremonial gatherings of this sort no matter which side he receives the pipe from.

Now follows another instalment of the sacred chants peculiar to the ceremonies which derive their origin from the Scarface legend.

Still singing, the priest takes from the pile of *Artemisia* the single eagle feather and placing it in the hand of the devotee, grasps the latter's wrist and guides the hand to wave the feather four times over the mound of clay. Guided by the priest, the host touches the clay mound four times with the feather, each time slightly pushing some of the clay, twice to the north, and twice to the south.

A right foot moccasin with the heel turned inside is next handed to the priest, who places it in the right hand of the host, and directs him to push some of the clay to the left or north. It is then changed to the left hand and some clay is moved by the moccasin to the right or south, after which the priest releases the hand of the other man who, with the sole of the moccasin, spreads the remaining clay evenly over the square place referred to above.

Again taking the feather, and directed as before, the younger man traces upon the now flattened clay a large crescent with the points or horns to the east. Midway between the points of the crescent a circle about three inches in diameter is marked, and another about the same size is traced to the east of it, on that side of the square nearest to the fire. Outside of the crescent and near its points are finally marked two oval spots. The feather being used to merely mark out the design it is deposited upon the *Artemisia*, and the host again takes up the moccasin and with the toe of it completes the several figures by making deep depressions along the lines made with the feather.

Under the same careful guidance he now takes some of the powdered charcoal, and sprinkling it in all of the depressions in the clay colours them black, beginning with the southern point of the crescent. Yellow ochre is now scattered along the edge of each of the black figures, with the exception of the one to the east next to the fireplace. In dropping the yellow material on the clay the operator's hands always follow the apparent course of the Sun, thus, for instance, when putting the yellow on the crescent he begins at the south corner, moves along the convex side at the west until the northern point is reached, when he works back inside of the concave on the east to the point of starting. This rule, which ethnologists call "the sun-wise circuit," is scrupulously followed by the Blackfoot in ritualistic matters.

The altar is now complete and its symbolism runs as follows:—The crescent represents the Moon, the central circle the Sun, the eastern disc the Morning Star, and the two oval marks at the side are parphelia or

sun-dogs. The black colour means night, and the yellow day. Of all the figures, that representing the Morning Star is alone without a yellow border, because he alone is never visible by daylight. The sun-dogs are the ornaments of the Sun, his face painting. The moccasin is used in the making of the figures because Starface in the first ceremony had for that purpose a moccasin of buffalo hide. That belonging to the right foot is alone proper for this use because the right hand and foot are stronger than the left and can be more depended upon. The feather, here, is the symbol of a cloud, and the feather first disturbs the clay mound because big clouds disperse under the direction of little clouds, as can be seen almost any day. So explains the Blackfoot ritualist.

The sacrificer now goes outside, and lowering the offering from its position at the top of the lodge, detaches it from the long pole, and carries it round the north side to the entrance at the east, where he stands while the priest inside chants one of the sacred songs. At the end of the song the bearer of the sacrifice walks to the south, and a second stand is made during the singing of another song. This being repeated at the west, and north, the bearer finally stands facing the door again, until, at a given signal from within, he enters, goes south of the fireplace and hands the offering to the priest, who places it upon the pile of *Artemisia* in front of him, the feather of the offering projecting over the clay painting.

The adept, taking hold of the other's wrist, directs him to untie the bag containing red earth, and to take therefrom a portion of the contents, which is deposited in the palm of the priest's left hand. A piece of beef fat follows the red earth in the same ceremonial manner and the two are well mixed together between the palms of the priest's hands, while the devotee removes his shirt and turns so as to face the priest, who is now ready to begin painting. First he smears the red mixture over the breast and arms of the sacrificer who turns about and receives a coating on his back and shoulders. Again he faces the priest who,—always using the palm of his left hand for a palette and his right fingers for brushes,—paints the host's face red, and calls for the next. The wives and children of the sacrificer come forward one at a time,—except when a mother carries a baby,—and their faces are smeared with the mixture. Other relatives and friends of the host bring their children for this part of the ceremony, as many as twenty and thirty people frequently being painted by the priest who, from time to time, replenishes his stock of paint, by adding more red earth and grease to his hands.

When all are painted red,—which is merely the ground work for the distinctive facial decoration of this ceremony,—the priest changes the colour by cleaning the red from his hands and substituting pulverized charcoal and grease. This is ceremonially mixed, with the assistance of the host, as before. Beginning with the host, all who have had their faces painted red now receive the decoration in black. Five black spots are first made on the face in the following positions and order, viz:—bridge of the nose, centre of the forehead, left cheek, chin and right cheek. A broad black circle is then made on the face following the same order and covering all of the spots except the one on the nose. As the person being painted kneels or sits to the south of the priest and facing him, the latter's movements, in applying the paint, are always "sun-wise." Each person also receives a ring of black around each wrist and, when clothing permits, each ankle. All of the rings are explained as being symbols of the path of the Sun.

The priest takes up the offering, when he has finished painting each individual, and touches it to the latter's head and shoulders, making that individual a participator in the sacrifice. The kneeling person turns, without rising, and the offering is then touched to the back, at which he or she departs, making room for the next who may desire to be painted.

Ceremonial decoration of the face and body, in this as in all other sacred customs of the Blackfoot, is supposed to protect the subject from evil. The ideas of the Indians respecting sacred face painting, somewhat resemble those entertained by some white people regarding the Christian rite of baptism; the principal difference being that thoughts of material benefits occupy the minds of the former, instead of the spiritual welfare which is the greater concern of the latter.

Upon one occasion while the painting was in progress in this ceremony, a woman entered and stated that her father, a brother of the host, who was lying ill in a neighbouring lodge, desired to be painted. As the man was in an advanced stage of consumption,—he died within a week,—the priest at first made no reply to the woman, but grumbled in an undertone that he was not a doctor and that people must foolishly consider him possessed of supernatural powers. After a moment's hesitation he gave a reluctant consent and the sick man entered and was painted. While decorating the people's faces the priest either sings or prays for a continuation of good health and prosperity on behalf of the adults and that the children painted may live to maturity. In the case of the sick man mentioned it was noticed that the priest varied the wording of the blessing and made it refer more to the man's family than to himself. He afterwards explained to the

writer that the dying man should not have made such a request of him, because the immediate object of the painting being to insure good health and a long life to the subject, the painting of the face of a man who was visibly dying was in the eyes of himself, the priest, almost an act of sacrilege, hence his reluctance to make a mockery of a ceremony in the efficacy of which, under proper circumstances, he firmly believed. The colour on the faces should be allowed to remain until the following day. Some Indians remove it after sun-down on the day of the ceremony, but the ritualists say that it should be left on the face throughout one night's sleep and then removed by rubbing with fur. It should not be washed off with water.

All having been painted, the priest takes up the forked fire stick and touches the handle of it at four different places with a small piece of "buffalo chip" which he then fixes in the fork at the end, and extends the "chip" towards the lodge fire, renewing his singing. At a certain place in the song one of the male guests knocks the "chip" off the fire stick and into the fire. This is done because in the olden time dried buffalo dung was used to make the ceremonial fire, from which coals were taken to make incense.

The host, using the fire stick, now transfers a red hot coal from the fire to the altar, and the priest breaks some pieces from the root of the *Ferula dissoluta* which he mixes with a little piece of fat and some of the powdered charcoal. These are rolled into a ball, and placed on the coal of fire on the altar, causing a smoke. Black pigment is added to this incense in order that good influences may extend over night as well as day.

The priest and the host now take up the sacrifice from its resting place on the *Artemisia*, and the former begins a series of chants which extend over half an hour. The tune being the feature of these songs the words are very few and scattered, but such words as are uttered, and the occasional signs used, show that the songs refer to the myth of Scarface. There is a song belonging to almost every incident connected with his mythical journey to the east.

Holding the offering in front of them, the two men move it from side to side, backward and forward, keeping time to the cadence of the songs. At the end of each chant the priest pushes the offering from himself to the sacrificer who grasps it tightly to his breast, muttering an inaudible prayer. The priest guides the movements of the offering so that as the songs continue, the eagle feathers at the top are lowered gradually towards the clay painting of the altar.

When this has continued until the tips of the feathers are about to touch the clay, the offering is lifted while the priest in a loud voice

makes his last prayer. He calls upon the Sun, Moon, and Morning Star to remember the number and importance of the sacrifices he has personally made to them in the past. He enumerates the principal religious ceremonies that he has held during his lifetime, and asks the deities to reward him by making the present proceedings successful. At the conclusion of the prayer,—which is a long one, covering all the ground imaginable,—he again renews singing and the movements of the offering, assisted by the sacrificer.

The feathers of the sacrifice are in the final song lowered three times, until they gently touch the crescent and other figures. At the end of the song the feathers are swept over the clay, and with a shout, the men violently sweep the offering back and forth over the face of the painting, completely obliterating every trace of the designs.

The destruction of the painting has a reference to the obliteration of the scar on the legendary hero's face.

Four bunches of *Artemisia* are now placed on the north side of the lodge, at equal distances apart, and extending from the altar to the door.

Taking his offering in his arms, the sacrificer stands up and beginning with the right foot steps on the four bunches of *Artemisia*, thus making his exit in four steps, using the fire stick to steady himself with.

Walking past the south side of the lodge he carries the offering away to some conspicuous place where it is set up and permanently exposed to the elements.

The exit of the host terminates the proceedings and the guests depart to their several homes.

The duration of the ceremony is from four to six hours, varied according to the quickness of the director and the number of persons painted.

Such is the Sacrificial Rite of the Blackfoot according to the personal observations of the writer and the explanations of the priests who officiated upon several occasions when the ceremony was witnessed previous to 1897, these offerings to the Sun and the ritualistic features being still practised by the Blackfoot to propitiate their principal deity.

Principal deity is here used advisedly, after having on one hand read that the superior god of these people is the "Creator," (*Apisto-to-kiw*) and on the other hand that their chief divinity is the "Napi" of mythological fame. Every middle aged Indian in the three tribes knows that the "Creator" was never heard of by them until the advent of the missionaries, and as for addressing prayers to or in any way worshipping "Napi," the Old Man of the legends, the blunderer, the im-

moral mischief maker, such an idea is very far from a Blackfoot Indian's appreciation of sacred things and may be dismissed.

Although the Sun is now, and has doubtless for centuries been, pre-eminently the Blackfoot divinity, it may be that they have or had more ancient deities and that in the legend of Scarface we have a history of the introduction from an eastern source, at a comparatively late stage, in their growth, of a religion which, though previously unknown to these people, ultimately became so popular as to occupy the leading place in their system.

For the identification of the different flora mentioned in the course of the paper the writer is indebted to the botanical branch of the Geological Survey.