

*Translation*The buffalo head — *Yá'há'yá!*

The half buffalo —

[*Ad libitum*].

This song refers to the crazy dance, which the author of the song saw the former warriors of his tribe performing in the spirit world. The crazy dance, called *Psam* by the Cheyenne and *Ahaka'wú* by the Arapaho, belonged to one order of the military organization already described in treating of the Arapaho songs. (See Arapaho song 43.) The name in both languages is derived from the word for "crazy." Men, women, and children took part in the ceremony, dressed in skins or other costume to represent various animals, as buffalos, panthers, deer, and birds, with one bear, two foxes, and seven wolves, besides two "medicine wolves." Each strove to imitate the animal personated in action as well as in appearance. It was the business of the two foxes to be continually running and stumbling over the others in their efforts to escape from the crowd. The dance, whose essential feature was the doing of everything by contraries, had its parallel among many eastern tribes, particularly among the old Huron and Iroquois. It was considered the most picturesque and amusing dance among the prairie tribes. The "half buffalo" of the song refers to the robe worn by certain of the dancers, which consisted of the upper half of a buffalo skin, the head portion, with the horns attached, coming over the head of the dancers. The dance was an exhibition of deliberate craziness in which the performers strove to outdo one another in nonsensical and frenzied actions, particularly in constantly doing the exact opposite of what they were told to do. It was performed only in obedience to a vow made by some person for the recovery of a sick child, for a successful war expedition, or for some other Indian blessing. It lasted four days, the performers dancing naked the first three days and in full dance costume on the fourth. The leaders in the absurdities were two performers whose bodies and cheeks were painted with white clay, and whose ears were filled with hair shed by the buffalo, which was believed to confer strong "medicine" powers. They carried whistles, and shot at the spectators with blunt arrows. Almost every license was permitted to these two, who in consequence were really held in dread by the others. Among other things the crazy dancers were accustomed to dance through a fire until they extinguished it by their tramping. This was done in imitation of the fire-moth, called *aha'kaa'*, "crazy," by the Arapaho, which hovers about a flame or fire and finally flies into it. They also handled poisonous snakes, and sometimes, it is said, would even surround and kill a buffalo by their unaided physical strength. The Cheyenne dance differed somewhat from that of the Arapaho. It was last performed in the south about ten years ago.