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Investigator,
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An Interview with Mr. J.J. Methvin

Medicine

The "medicine" spoken of so much in Indian Stories, is an Idol or Image made of rock. The face is painted with a solid coat of yellow. On this yellow background are alternating stripes of red and black coming down in a zigzag course from the eyes and mouth. This image, when the Indians were not on the march/^{was} kept in a sack, made for it and hung on the back of the medicine man's tepee. Inside the tepee is a similar bag containing scalps, paint, and other charms of various kinds that had been gathered through superstition.

Medicine Dance

The medicine dance was held annually to worship and to make sacrifices to the idols; when they had been unusually successful in war.

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When a medicine dance was to be held it was customary for the chief medicine man to hang his "Medicine" or idol around his neck and tie a representation of it on his saddle and circle every tepee, whose occupants he wished at the dance, and all those thus circled were bound by all sacred obligations to go, under threat of heavy penalty. Those who refused were sure to be visited by some great disaster sent by the idol, before the year was up.

Before starting the Medicine man painted himself white from head to toe, and the only garment he wore was a buffalo robe. The medicine man neither ate nor drank while he circled these tepees unless it took him more than four days, then he may stop and build a "sweat house". There he worships, then he can have food and water. He then continues on his way until all the tepees of his tribe have been circled.

On his return to camp the Indians break camp and all the Indians from every direction assemble at one point. After all were settled the four chief medicine

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men would get together and make an offering of some kind, then select a tree, straight and sleek, which was to be used for the post around which they were to dance.

The order was as follows:

A good level place is selected near timber and water. Then the medicine men return and send out word that a place has been selected and everything is ready. But if a place had not been selected then the whole camp must move to another place that the medicine men have chosen. The medicine men go out again to make a selection. When one is finally made and announced the Dog Soldiers get together, paint their bodies and ^{beat} the tom-toms and work up lots of excitement. On the next day the crowd begin their approach towards the consecrated spot. The chief medicine man leads, followed by his wife carrying the idol. The captive Mexicans come next, then the twelve chosen medicine men follow with sign and symbol of worship. Then come the crowd with the dog soldiers as out-riders.

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They would go a certain distance then they would stop and worship, they did this four times and at the last halt an old Indian, noted for his age and wisdom, stepped forth and announced to the crowd that "Whoever knocks down yonder pole upon the consecrated ground nearly a mile away shall have special privileges and honors, and peculiar blessings shall come to his bands of dog soldiers during the year". After the announcement there was a wild mad rush with no thought of personal safety. There were four honors. The person knocking down the pole gets the chief honor, and the others in order.

When the rush is over a circle is formed. On the west side the "medicine" tepee is located, into which the idol is carried and where the medicine man stays the four days of the dance.

The next morning early, a Mexican woman is sent out with the dog soldiers to cut down the tree that has been chosen. As they approach the tree they stop

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and worship four times, as they did nearing the consecrated ground. When the Mexican woman strikes the tree with the axe, then stops and she and the dog soldiers sing and pray. Then she gives it another stroke, followed by worship. This is kept up until the tree is cut down. Then the soldiers carry the pole back to the grounds by this same four fold manner of approach.

While this has been going on, the rest of the crowd ^{has} built an arbor for the dance. It takes four days to complete all the arrangements. When all is ready those who dance go outside the circle and strip themselves of all clothing except the breech cloth, paint their bodies white, dress in a buffalo skin and finally go in making the noise of a buffalo bull. They circle around the medicine man's tepee four times then go back to the entrance of the large circle, then to the entrance of the arbor around the center pole. Circling this four times each time motioning to enter, but not entering

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until the fourth time. Then they take their places in the dance circle. The medicine man comes from his tepee, circles four times before entering, then enters and hangs the idol upon the pole and takes his place behind the idol. The musicians go through the same performance and take their places near the entrance, just inside the tepee. They begin their music on the tom-tom and rattle gourd. The medicine man then steps out perfectly nude except his buckskin breech clout, the ends of which are drawn up through a panther belt about the waist, and hanging down between his painted legs. He is painted yellow, while his feet are black. He has a bunch of sage brush tied to his wrists and ankles, and wears a jack rabbit bonnet. In one hand he carries a fan of crow feathers and the other an eagle bone whistle.

He goes up to the image, takes a bit of root of some wild plant into his mouth and grinding it between his teeth turns to the circle of dancers and dancing around blows it upon them. He then takes eagle bone whistle,

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running around the circle of dancers blowing it with all his might. He goes through this performance four times. Then the crowd is permitted to join in. They began their dance singing, leaping, yelling, praying until tired out. They rested awhile then began again. They would stare at the image making unearthly noises, stare at the sun in a foolish idiotic way crying out, saying: "Yes our enemies are blind, they can't hurt us. We can steal their horses, we are secure."

The medicine man then calls attention to the crow feather fan in his hand and begins to twirl it around and around, everyone tries to keep his eyes on the fan and keep his head in motion with it. After awhile they would become so dizzy that they fell over and lay there seemingly unconscious. While in this state they sometimes had visions indicating the future destiny in life.

After the dance is over but before breaking up all

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who expect to go on the warpath or stealing or plundering expeditions during the year gathered around a buffalo rawhide. Each man took hold of it with one hand and with small sticks in the other beat upon it, calling upon their idol to bless them. When satisfied with the performance they broke up into small bands, to go to various fields of plunder and murder. It was a pledge, and no one could go through this performance except those who intended to go on the warpath.