

## SUN DANCE OF THE SIOUX.

A GREAT RELIGIOUS CELEBRATION BY AMERICAN INDIANS.

The Ceremony Described in the March Century—Barbarous Rites of Cruelty and Self Torture—They Sometimes Lead to Painting and Prove the Warrior's Nerve.

The March number of The Century Magazine has an article by Lieut. Schwatka, describing the great sun dance held a few years ago by Sioux Indians at the Spotted Tail agency on Beaver creek, Nebraska.

White men are rarely permitted to view the ceremony, and it was only through the influence of Spotted Tail, the chief, and Standing Elk, the head warrior, that Lieut. Schwatka was permitted to be present at this dance, the celebration of which occupied eight or nine days.

In the magazine the ceremony is fully described. We quote from advance sheets but two incidents of the dance. The charge upon the sun pole, which Mr. Frederic Remington has made the subject of a spirited illustration, is described as follows:



WAVED HIS BLANKETED ARM ABOVE HIM. [After Frederic Remington in the March Century.]

"Long before sunrise the eager participants in the next great step were preparing themselves for the ordeal, and a quarter of an hour before the sun rose above the broken hills of white clay a long line of naked young warriors, in gorgeous war paint and feathers, with rifles, bows and arrows, and war lances in hand, faced the east and the sun pole, which was from 500 to 600 yards away. Ordinarily this group of warriors numbers from 50 to 200 men. An interpreter near me estimated the line I beheld as from 1,000 to 1,200 strong. Not far away, on a high hill overlooking the barbaric scene, was an old warrior, a medicine man of the tribe, I think, whose solemn duty it was to announce by a shout that could be heard by every one of the expectant through the exact moment when the tip of the morning sun appeared above the eastern hills.

"Perfect quiet rested upon the line of young warriors and upon the great throng of savage spectators that blacked the green hills overlooking the arena. Suddenly the old warrior, who had been kneeling on one knee, with his extended palm shading his scraggy eyebrows, arose to his full height, and in a slow, dignified manner waved his blanket arm above his head. The few warriors who were still unmounted now jumped hurriedly upon their ponies; the broken, wavering line rapidly took on a more regular appearance, and then the old man, who had gathered himself for the great effort, hurled forth a yell that could be heard to the uttermost limits of the great throng. The morning sun had sent its commands to its warriors on earth to charge.

"The shout from the hill was re-echoed by the thousand men in the valley; it was caught up by the spectators on the hills as the long line of warriors hurled themselves forward towards the sun pole, the objective point of every armed and naked savage in the yelling line. As they converged towards it the slower ponies dropped out and the weaker ones were crushed to the rear. Nearer and nearer they came, the long line becoming massed until it was but a surging crowd of plunging horses and yelling, gesticulating riders.

"When the leading warriors had reached a point within a hundred yards of the sun pole, a sharp report of rifles sounded along the line, and a moment later the rushing mass was a sheet of flame, and the rattle of rifle shots was like the rapid beat of a drum resounding among the hills. Every shot, every arrow and every lance was directed at the pole, and bark and chips were flying from its sides like shavings from the rotary bit of a planer. When every bullet had been discharged, and every arrow and lance had been hurled, the riders crowded around the pole and shouted as only excited savages can shout.

Several days following the consecration of the sun pole were devoted to sun worship, fasting, dancing and various other rites. The final ordeal is thus described by Lieut. Schwatka: "The row of dancers took their places promptly at sunrise, but it was not before 9 or 10 that the tortures began.

"Then each of the young men presented himself to a medicine man, who took between his thumb and forefinger a fold of the loose skin of the breast, about half way between the nipple and the collar bone, lifted it as high as possible, and then ran a very narrow bladed but sharp knife through the skin underneath the hand. In the aperture thus made, and before the knife was withdrawn, a stronger skewer of bone about the size of a carpenter's pencil was inserted. Then the knife blade was taken out, and over the projections of this skewer, backwards and forwards, alternately right and left, was thrown a figure-eight noose with a strong thong of dressed

skin. This was tied to a long skin rope fastened, at its other extremity, to the top of the sun pole in the center of the arena. Both breasts are similarly punctured, the thongs from each converging and joining the rope which hangs from the pole. The whole object of the devotee is to break loose from these fetters. To liberate himself he must tear the skewers through the skin, a horrible task that even with the most resolute may require many hours of torture. His first attempts are very easy, and seem intended to get him used to the horrible pain he must yet endure before he breaks loose from the thongs.

"As he increases his efforts his shouts increase, huge drops of perspiration pour down his greasy, painted skin and every muscle stands out on his body in tortuous ridges, his swaying frame, as he throws his whole weight wildly against the fearful fetters, being convulsed with shudders. All the while the beating of the tom-toms and the wild, weird chanting of the singers near him continue. The wonderful strength and extensibility of the human skin is most forcibly and fearfully displayed in the strong struggles of the quivering victims. I have seen these bloody pieces of bone stretched to such a length from the devotee that his outstretched arms in front of him would barely allow his fingers to touch them.

"I know it is not pleasant to dwell long upon such a cruel spectacle. Generally, in two or three hours the victim is free, but there are many cases where double and even triple that time is required. Oftentimes there are half a dozen swinging wildly from the pole, running towards it and then moving backwards with the swiftness of a war horse and the fierceness of a lion in their attempts to tear the accursed skewers from their wounded flesh. Occasionally some over ambitious youth will erect four stakes within the arena, and fasten skewers to both breasts and to both shoulders will throw himself backwards and forwards against the four ropes that hold the skewers to the stakes.

"Paintings are not uncommon even among these sturdy savages, but no forfeit, opprobrium, censure or loss of respect in any way seems to follow. The victim is cut loose and placed on the floor of some lodge near by and left in charge of his nurses. The only attempt I saw to break loose from double skewers in front and behind terminated in this manner. Whether the men ever afterwards enter the cruel contest after having thus failed I do not know. It may be possible that some exceedingly ambitious warrior may enter the lists year after year to show his prowess, but I understand that it is supposed to be done but once in a lifetime. It is not obligatory, and by far the greater number grow up sensibly abstaining from such savage luxuries. When the day is almost over, and the solar deity is nearly down in the west, the self tortured warriors file from the inclosed arena, one by one, and just outside the doors, deeply covered with handsomely painted buffalo robes, they kneel, and with arms crossed over their bloody breasts and with bowed heads face the setting sun, and rise only when it has disappeared.

"Many other horrible variations have been reported to me, such as tying a saddle or a buffalo's skull to the end of the long rope fastened to the skewer and running over the prairie and through the timber, the saddle or skull bounding after the victim until he liberates himself; or, when fainting, to draw the tortured man clear of the ground by the ropes until his weight overcame the strength of the distended skin. My informants told me that no two of the ceremonies were alike, the self torture in some form being the one common link in all. The consecration of the sun pole, the much of the dancing and singing, the double efforts of ambitious youths and other ceremonies might be left out entirely or others substituted. I describe it only as I saw it."

### Salt Lake's First Gentle Mayor.

George M. Scott goes into history as the first Gentle or non-Mormon mayor of Salt Lake City. Forty-two years ago last July the city was founded, three years later it was incorporated and early

in 1870 the non-Mormons made their first regular fight—Jews, Gentiles and apostate Mormons combining in a "Liberal party." This year they have carried Salt Lake City, Provo and Ogden, yet their total vote in the territory is but

6,500, while that of the Mormons is 14,000, even after all the "polygs" are disfranchised.

Mr. Scott is a native of Clinton county, N. Y., 54 years old. He went to California in 1852, and thence in 1871 to Utah, where he has been active in business and has prospered. There is great rejoicing over this long deferred triumph, and sanguine Gentiles think they see the overthrow of theocracy and redemption of Utah now at hand.

### He Has Two Sets of Views.

At the meeting recently, in Paris, of the French Society for the Study of Political Economy M. Leon Say was compelled to announce that he was unable to learn the name of the author to whom had been awarded the annual prize of 3,000 francs for an essay on political economy. The successful writer, who declines to claim his honorarium, is said to be a well known French statesman, who remains in the background because his views as presented to the society are at variance with his public expressions.

An old woman, for some time an inmate of an English workhouse, and regarded as a deserving object of charity, confessed the other day that she was the owner of a house and had £200 in a savings bank. She is no longer a guest of the British nation.

## WHERE FLOWERS GROW.

ASTORIA, LONG ISLAND, A LAND OF BEAUTIFUL FLOWERS.

What Goes On in One of the Great Green-houses Which Supply New York with Flowers and Plants—The Problems of Foreign and Hybridization.

To one in search of poesy or anything above the dull level of the commonplace, probably the last spot which would suggest itself as likely to yield it would be the typical, prosaic Long Island town. Yet one of these, and one of the most prosaic at that, is—paradoxical as it may appear—a veritable land of flowers. Astoria teems with lovely, though hidden blooms.

If the flowers which the florist's jealous care covers from the inclement weather were left exposed, they would spread over thousands of acres, and make of the little town a garden of loveliness.

For eight months in the year the daily supply of flowers to this city amounts to \$15,000 worth, while on special occasions, such as Easter and other holidays, the amount is nearly doubled, and the greater part of this supply comes from Long Island.

The largest of the Astoria nurseries stands just within the limits of the village. The wide expanse of turf around it is dotted with no less than thirty-one greenhouses, whose glistening roofs comprise some 75,000 square feet of glass.

The hybridization of plants to form new specimens is in no small measure dependent on chance. The method employed is in itself simple, and consists of dusting the pollen from the bloom of one plant upon the stigma of the other, the result being a flower partaking of the characters of both. The incidental circumstances, however, are almost impossible to regulate, save by scientific application and the minutest care. The selection of two plants which are able to join, is, in itself, a test of the floriculturist's skill, and this being achieved, the temperature must be regulated to the convenience of the plants, and the dryness or moisture of the atmosphere carefully watched. Yet, in spite of all precautions, and for no apparent reason, the attempted hybridization is often a failure. Some of the best discoveries ever made in this branch of horticulture have been brought about accidentally, the beautiful chrysanthemum called Mrs. Alpheus Hardy being the result of one of these fortunate blunders.

**FORCING BLOSSOMS AND FRUIT.** Another problem which has from time immemorial busied the nurserymen is the question of producing blooms or fruit at stated periods by forcing, in defiance of natural laws, and although this has not yet been reduced to a certain law, important improvements have been made. A skillful gardener can, by the regulation of heat, moisture and fertilizers, considerably advance or retard the production of any plant. In Japan, where floriculture has attained to scientific heights as yet unknown in America, the precise day can be fixed for the blossoming or fruiting.

Only a vast experience can foretell the degree of heat necessary to a plant, and in all nurseries the greatest precautions are utilized to insure success. In the nurseries referred to, more than 40,000 feet of pipe are used for heating, while a windmill pumps 20,000 gallons of water daily for use in the hothouses. The regulation of heat varies with the nature of the plant. The difference of temperature between individual hothouses is marked; for, while in one there will be 100 degrees, or more of dry, parching heat, the next will be almost cold, and the air of another may be heavy with a moist heat which turns it into a vapor bath.

The amount of forcing also varies with different species of plants, some thriving under it and displaying marvelous beauties which they never attain in their native state, while others, like the slender *Dendrobium Thysiflorum*, refuse to depart from ordinary laws and die when artificial means are applied. The plants are watered every day, and in some cases twice or three times a day. This alone takes up a considerable amount of the workman's time, but it is not the only attention claimed by them. A daily routine must be made in each greenhouse and each one of the growths investigated, certain plants clipped or grafted and weeds and withered leaves removed from all.

To the floriculturist flowers have no romance. Their cultivation to him is a mere matter of commercial value, and the sight of a florist and his apprentices seizing delicate plants by the handful and pulling them hither and thither always fills the layman with alarm. Each of the spacious hothouses is devoted to a single plant and its varieties, and the whole number aggregates nearly 1,000,000 plants. This firm handles more ferns than any house in the country, and it sends out over 100,000 ferns annually. All sorts and conditions of ferns are represented, and from the well known Adiantum, or maidenhair, to the Dixonia, or tree fern, which frequently sells for \$50.

The other hothouses contain a prismatic gradation of colors, from the pale yellow of jonquils to the burning orange of the large amaryllis, and from the dazzling white azalea to its richest deep red shade. Of course, roses are plentifully represented; the well known La France is here; also the majestic American beauty, and the newer varieties which have superseded them in popular favor, as the Bride, Puritan, William Francis Bennett and Mme. Holstie. The fashion in roses, like every other, is subject to fads, and their prices are greatly affected in consequence. When a rose is "the rage" the smallest plant, as it sprouts in the tiny pots known as "thumb pots," is worth from \$1 to \$2; while later, when its popularity is on the wane, the same plant fetches barely five or ten cents.—New York Commercial Advertiser.

In Germany the law makes servants give a month's notice before leaving. The mistress must give similar notice before a discharge.

## ON METEORIC SHOWERS.

THEIR VISITS OF FREQUENT PERIODICAL OCCURRENCE.

Peculiarities of the Heavenly Displays. New Features of the Sun Revealed to the Astronomers—A Talk With a Professor on a Sky High Subject.

In answer to several questions regarding the frequency of meteoric showers Professor Very said:

"There are certain epochs in the year when particular meteoric showers are due. Assiduous observation has given a list of nearly 100 such showers in the course of a year, each of which may be expected on a certain date from a certain part of the heavens.

"Particular showers have characteristic features; that is, some meteors are very swift; others rather slow. Some vanish and leave no trace, while others are accompanied by tails and leave streaks after the nucleus has disappeared. Few of these showers last more than one or two days, though there are some instances where it is suspected that successive meteors belonging to the same group appear during several weeks. Certain dates have been noticed to be more especially fireball epochs. That is, the rare event of an exceptionally large and brilliant meteor or fireball is more apt to occur on certain dates.

"Jan. 25 is the date of the meteoric shower characterized by the swiftness of its components, which are usually attended by streaks. The radiant point of this shower is in the constellation called Bernice's Hair, a star cluster—one of the morning constellations. As this meteor is claimed to have been seen in the unclassified sporadic meteors. Information as to the position of motion, apparent brilliancy, color, time of appearance and length of time during which the appearance lasted is likely to be valuable in the recovery of the principal characteristics of an event which is necessarily seen but by few."

"How do you account for these meteoric showers coming at regular periods?" was asked.

"All that we can say is that the celestial spaces are thinly populated in every direction with these scattered fragments, which are veritable miniature planets traveling in different orbits around the sun in many instances, and serving as messengers from one star to another in others.

"The number of them is simply countless. They make up in number what they lack in size, so that if we could gather together all the minute members that go to make up a group it might make a body of very respectable size, although the individual components are so small that they seldom escape complete disintegration and dissolution in their passage through the atmosphere."

"What produces the great light which always follows the passage of a meteor?"

"The light which is seen while the passage of a meteor through the air lasts may be due partly to the combustion of the materials of the air of life, but it is mainly an incandescence of the condensed atmosphere which accumulates in advance of an object which is moving many times the rapidity of a cannon ball—often, I may say, with many hundred times the rapidity of a cannon ball. Under these conditions even the seemingly flimsy resistance of the air becomes as great as that of a solid body, producing intense heat, and in the case of a large meteoric stone frequently resulting in the fracture and demolition of the object.

"Colored meteors are sometimes seen with a peculiar tint of the flame, being due to the burning of some special ingredient of the meteor. We have yellow, green and occasionally red meteors, but the majority are white like the majority of the stars. It cannot be said that any one part of the earth can be more affected by these visitors than another. There is, however, a diurnal periodicity, the larger numbers being seen in the early morning hours when that portion of the heavens comes in view toward which the orbital motion of the earth is carrying us. We then see not merely the comparatively few meteors whose speed is sufficient to enable them to overtake the earth, but that larger number composed of all those which are gathered up in the track of the advancing earth, whether moving with against or athwart its course."

"The appearance of the collected results of the observation of the total eclipse of Jan. 1, 1890, shows that this event has added many interesting facts to the previous knowledge of such occurrences. A large and very perfect photograph of the corona was obtained by Professor William H. Pickering, of Cambridge, Mass., and one of a smaller size by Professor Barnard, of the Lick observatory.

"These show the sheaves of curling fragments about the sun's poles in great detail, indicating the composite nature of many of the individual filaments, and confirming the photographs taken at the previous sun spot minimum of 1878, thus rendering it almost certain that the corona at this period assumes a symmetrical form with regularly disposed filaments curving away on either side of the sun's axis and broad equatorial wings of less discriminated structure.

"All this is very different from what is seen during an eclipse when the activity of the sun is in its height. At such times the corona has a rudely quadrilateral outline, with four wings projecting from regions approximately 40 degrees north and south of the equator, and the whole is made up of curved branching and interlacing streamers extending to a much greater distance from the body of the sun, and with the equatorial sheaves less symmetrically disposed. In regard to the extent of the corona, it is difficult to compare successive eclipses observed from different parts of the earth with very varying atmospheric condition. A small amount of haze will blot out much of the fainter detail. The presence or absence of some of these fainter features may merely signify the presence or absence of the condition of their observation, but the variation of type is a thing beyond question. We seem to have a connection indicated between the broad equatorial wings and the sun spot zones."

—Pittsburg Dispatch.

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