

## Folk Lore Tales of the American Indians.

(Club paper written by Dr. Susan LaFlesche Picotte)

The folk lore tales of the American Indian have been preserved and handed down from one generation to another intact as they fell from the lips of the story teller, the only medium of transmission, for the ambitions and aspirations of the primitive Indian as well as the Indian of today encompassed not only the physical but moral welfare of the Indian child, and these stories were to teach him certain moral truths concerning the virtues, truthfulness, patience, kindness, courtesy, respect for others, honesty and also what he would need in his physical struggle in the warfare against the elements of nature, perseverance, bravery, caution, endurance and self control.

The Indian child is regarded as the most valuable asset of the Indian home and his future was carefully safeguarded by the tribal organization in the numerous rites and ceremonials that began when the child was five days old and which took place at the different stages of its growth until he reached manhood.

On the fifth day the child was named by the grandfather by a name from his father's gens; on the eighth day the following beautiful invocation was given by the medicine man, as the infant was turned towards each point of the compass or the four winds:

Ho! ye Sun, Moon, Stars, all ye that move in the heavens,  
I bid you hear me!  
Into your midst has come a new life.  
Consent ye, I implore!  
Make its path smooth, that it may reach the brow of the  
first hill!

Ho! ye Winds, Clouds, Rain, Mist, all ye that move in the air,  
I bid you hear me!  
Into your midst has come a new life.  
Consent ye, I implore!  
Make its path smooth, that it may reach the brow of the  
second hill!

Ho! Ye Hills, Valleys, Rivers, Lakes, Trees, Grasses, all ye  
of the earth,  
I bid you hear me!  
Into your midst has come a new life.  
Make its path smooth, that it may reach the brow of the  
third hill!

Ho! Ye Birds, great and small, that fly in the air,  
Ho! Ye Animals, great and small, that dwell in the forest,  
Ho! Ye insects that creep among the grasses and burrow in  
the ground,--  
I bid you hear me!  
Into your midst has come a new life.  
Consent ye, I implore!  
Make its path smooth, that it may reach the brow of the  
fourth hill!

Ho! All ye of the heavens, all ye of the air, all ye of the  
earth:  
I bid you all to hear me!  
Into your midst has come a new life.  
Consent ye, consent ye all, I implore!  
Make its path smooth- then shall it travel beyond the  
four hills!

There were ceremonies on the first cutting of the  
hair, on putting on the first moccasins, and so on till  
manhood. All are beautiful and symbolic; some are prayers.

The white people have an erroneous impression of the bringing up of the Indian child, that he is neglected; on the contrary from infancy he is rigorously trained to prompt obedience and taught self control, physical and moral, truthfulness and respect for his elders. There are no shams or pretenses in the Indians' life such as we find among the white people, perhaps one reason is there are less of the conventions. The child is brought up in an atmosphere of candor and frankness; the result of such training was that we had no murders, no robberies, and deceit, lying, stealing were all looked down upon and one who did these things was a marked man.

We find no legends but there are myths, fables, parables, traditions, fairy tales; some tell of the origin of certain things, others are hero tales; some teach the cardinal virtues and in every one we find a moral attached.

Other stories told the thrilling adventures of warriors and hunters, but the folk lore tales were associated with the intimate home life of the people and of the memory pictures of the past none is more dear than that of the family circle gathered around the fire place at the close of the day when all the daily tasks were done---- I see again the fire place in the center of the lodge piled high with logs,--- the leaping flames throwing fantastic shadows on the rapt faces of the listeners; the story teller in the seat of honor always accorded to the principal guest---- the older people al-

most as eager as the children and the look of blissful anticipation about to be realized on the faces of the little ones as they nestled down between father and mother with a sense of security and home. Would that these conditions were true today as they were a generation ago, that safe and secure with the father and mother in the home, we could find the children of the white as well as the Indian race; today we find them on the streets and in the pool halls, making a necessity for settlement work. I never felt the protecting love and care of my father so much or the safe security of my home as I did at this hour when for the time the world with all its cares and work ceased to exist as the story teller led us into another world peopled with mythical characters and animals that seemed almost human.

A mythical character-- Insh-tin-thin-ka (Monkey) seems to represent Deceit,--- by his transformations and impersonations he seems to succeed for awhile but usually comes to grief. My brother thinks he represents the wind, no one knows whither he goes or what he will do next.

Wahunthinshiga (Orphan) is a young Hero, who stands for Success, obtained through ambition.

Cayote or Wolf represents Trickery.

Rabbit, who though one of the smallest and helpless of all animals, accomplished much by his ingenuity and wit.

The Turtle makes a good showing through his Resource-



fulness.

These tales loose somewhat in their mere recital without their picturesque setting-- the graphic delineation of traits of the characters- the dramatic gestures-- the emphasis and pause at proper moments-- the terse comments and criticisms of the story teller--- all enhanced the interest of the story and so vivid were the impressions produced on our childish minds that the most shy and bashful child lost all consciousness of self and danced with abandon to the songs interspersed here and there throughout the tales. We did not dare ask for folk lore tales in the spring or summer for we were told that the snakes would all come out of their holes to listen. They were reserved for the long winter evenings when time would otherwise hang heavy.

Aaman gifted as a story teller was a man of dignity and importance and was treated with honor and respect by old and young alike.

Sometimes we had to do considerable coaxing and be on our good behavior for days before we gained his consent and when the evening came there was a hurrying to and fro of childish feet to wait on him-- laying down the buffalo robes for him to sit on-- giving him a drink--- handing him his pipe and bag of kinnikinnic-- fearful lest we might omit some point of etiquette and thus offend him. When I was a child an old blind man was the story teller and historian of the

tribe; after his death his grandson took his place.

Four is the magical number, all undertakings of whatever nature being successful ~~at~~ the fourth time.

I will not here tell the tale of The Dance of the Turkeys, or How the Trees came to be Named.

How the Silver Fox taught the Coyote to fish.

A Coyote walking along saw his friend, the Silver Fox, eating a fish. "How did you get that fish, my friend?" he asked. "I made a hole in the ice, stuck my tail in and that is the way I caught my fish." said the Silver Fox. The Coyote made a hole in the ice and stuck his tail in the water. It was very cold and his tail froze in the ice. He tried for a long time to get it out, when he did get it out there was nothing but the tail bones left and he said, "Silver Fox, you have done me." The Coyote walked away singing, "Munthinkaha sinda ab the snuathi ha, Munsinda tha, Munsinda tha."

Translation: My tail used to drag on the ground,  
My tail, my tail.

These tales were not told simply for passing the time, but to make children ask questions.

## The sleeping Elk.

Wahunthinshiga (the orphan) found an Elk asleep. He walked around the sleeping Elk and picking some grass, tickled the Elk's nostrils with it, but the Elk did not wake up.

He ran home and said, "Grandmother, burn your dress up, burn your dress up." "I will have nothing to wear if I Burn the dress." said the Grandmother. "You will have a fringed buck-skin dress to wear." said Wahunthinshiga.

The Grandmother threw her dress into the fire and followed him. They came to the sleeping Elk.

The Elk's nostrils began to twitch and the old Grandmother said, "He is not dead; look at his nostrils." Wahunthinshiga said, "No, I blew some medicine into his nostrils to kill him, that is what makes them twitch." The Elk snorted and jumping up ran away.

"Grandmother, run and pull your dress out of the fire, run!" said Wahunthinshiga. The old Grandmother ran but the dress was burned up.



## When and How Fire came to be first used.

Once upon a time Aquomi lived alone with her daughter. All the strongest animals went to see the daughter and chief among them was Leopard. He said to Aquomi, "I want to marry your daughter. I am above many animals and I can kill any I choose.. You shall always have enough to eat." A young Buffalo went to see the daughter. The Buffalo said to Aquomi, "I want your daughter. I live on grasses and in the fall I am very fat." But Aquomi said, "My daughter, will I live if I eat grass?" The Bear went to see the daughter. He said, "I can live on ants and I can eat the flesh of any animal I want. I want your daughter." Aquomi said, "Would I live if I ate ants?" The Panther appeared and said, "I can catch any Deer I want and can always have plenty of meat for your to eat." Aquomi said, "My daughter, would I live if I ate raw flesh alone?" The Panther went sadly away.

Wahunthinshiga went one day to court the daughter and when the animals saw him come to Aquomi's, they said, "Look at him, look at him." and they all laughed among themselves. Wahunthinshiga said to his Grandmother, "Grandmother, I am going to see Aquomi's daughter." But the grandmother said, "Do not go; they will all laugh at you." They say only the greatest among animals have gone to court the daughter. They will play tricks on you.

Four stripped Pecan nut maidens were sitting together together.

"Wahunthinshinga, here are four stripped Pecan nut maidens, waiting here for you together." they all sang.

"Oh ho ho, Oh ho ho," said Wahunthinshinga, "my Grandmother blackens you and then I eat you. I do not want the likes of you. I am going to see Aquomi's daughter."

When he reached Aquomi's he said, "Old woman, only the most aristocratic have come to offer themselves to your daughter. Although I have no hopes I too have come. I shall hunt. My grandmother will cut and dry the meat. In the winter she will cook the meat with wild turnips and potatoes. She will blacken and cook the Pecan nuts and together we will eat them." Aquomi said, "My daughter, I have been hoping for cooked food. As I have now heard of cooked food, you shall marry him. It is what I have wished."

The animals scattered in different directions. Wahunthinshiga went home with his wife. Since that time fire has been used to cook food with. As they passed the place where the stripped Pecan nut maidens sat they heard the song, "Aquomi, your husband fell into the water and has gone as foam."

The wife said, "Listen." but Wahunthinshiga said,

"My head aches, walk faster."

The song was repeated four times and when the wife said, "Listen" he would only tell her to walk faster.

As they were about to cross a creek Wahunthin-shinga fell into the creek and was drowned, but the wife who had crossed safely went on to his Grandmother. They took meat and food to Aquomi's and all lived together.

## The Deer and the Fawn.

### (An Otoo Story)

The Deer and its daughter were going on an expedition.

(1) "Mother, I see a person looking at us." said the daughter. "There are no persons around, it is only a crow ahead of us. I have cached some sweet potatoes for you. Walk faster and you shall eat them." the mother said.

(2) "Mother, I can see a person looking at us." said the fawn. "There are no persons, it is only a crow ahead of us. I have cached some plums for you and you can eat them. Walk faster." the mother said.

(3) "Mother, I can see a person looking at us." said the Fawn. "It is only a crow, stop saying it is a person. I have cached some acorns for you ahead of us and you can eat them; walk faster." the mother said.

(4) The fourth time the fawn said, "I see a person looking at us." It is only a crow. Ahead of us I have cached some wild beans; for you; walk faster."

Just then the Hunter shot and killed the mother and the frightened fawn ran away crying,-



Nunha ni a shinga bi a haki,

Kacha bi a sha thunsthle

Intanda pi thun na thesada.

Hinyo! Hinyo!

Translation--

Mother, I said it was a person,

You said it was a crow,

~~For~~ that your liver is sizzling.

Hinyo! Hinyo!

The last word is a term of lamentation.

## A Fish Story.

(A Winnebago Legend.)

There was a lake, very big and very deep. Two young men went Ikemonthin, that is going to visit relatives at a distance, toward the big lake. When they reached the shore of the lake they sat down and one of them said, "My friend, let us rest here."

As they sat there they saw a big, white, hollow cotton-wood tree. One of them said, "Some animal may live there. I shall climb the tree and see." "Do not do so," said the other. When he had climbed up he looked in and saw a great big white cat fish. "HO, my friend, I said so. Here is a big fish." "My friend, do not take it" said the other. "I am afraid of it." The other took it and said as he reached the ground, "I shall cook it and eat it." "Do not" said the other.

He took it, cooked it and ate it, and asked the other to eat with him. The other refused, saying, "Whoever heard of a fish in a tree. I shall not eat of it as I am afraid."

"It is a good lake fish and I shall eat it." He ate it all not leaving a single piece. No sooner had he swallowed the last piece when he was seized with thirst. "My friend, I must go and drink, I am so thirsty." His friend said, "I will go and get you some; you stay here."

So his friend brought him water, but his thirst

was unquenched, and when his friend was tired out fetching water, the young man said, "My friend, I will go myself" saying which he laid down on the shore and commenced to drink. His friend tried to pull him away but he couldn't and hopelessly watched him. He saw a change in his face, his friend was turning into a fish. When the transformation of the young man into a cat-fish was accomplished, he glided away into the lake.

His friend turned to the village he had been traveling to and went on his way crying. He told everything that had happened.

After a number of years the people said to him, "Let us journey to the place where your friend was changed- we want to see the place." He took them to the lake and showed them the old white cotton-wood tree still standing. He pointed to the middle of the lake where he had the last sight of his friend and just then they all heard the voice of the young man giving a war-whoop.

Long after this, a caravan of buffalo hunters going along the shore of the lake, saw, swimming on the lake, something that had long hair on its head and which they said was the son of the young man who was transformed into the cat-fish. Many saw this take place.

(Note- This is an old, old story told by Hunhamonthin, a Winnebago.) It is considered a tradition, not a story.)

## The Dance of the Turkey.

Wahunthinshiga (Orphan) lived all alone with his old grandmother, he said to her, "Grandmother, I am going away for a little while, but I will be back." and went away.

He found a great many turkeys together and he said to them, "Come over here and I will sing you a dance song so you can dance."

"He says he will sing for us to dance, come closer together" said a turkey; so they all came closer together. "Draw around and stand close together", said Wahunthinshiga.

Ha, wadumba thinka,

Inshta zhida, inshta zhi da;

Imba thin unda, imba thin unda.

Translation- He who looks will have

Red eyes, red eyes;

Flap your wings, flap your wings.

(Note- When the story teller begins to sing this song all the little Indian children who are listening to the story have to get up and begin to dance; they dance close together just as the turkeys did and bending over with their hands on their knees; when the singer says flap your wings, they sway from side to side, keeping perfect



time to the music.)

"No turkey must open his eyes and look at me while I am singing, or his eyes will turn red," said Wahunthinshiga, "and the biggest turkeys must dance on the outside of the circle."

Wahunthinshiga had a great big bag with him which he opened and as the turkeys danced by he took one after the other of the biggest ones by the neck and put them in the bag.

The song was repeated four times; but the fourth time, a little turkey opened his eyes just a little and saw Wahunthinshiga putting a big turkey into his bag. This is the reason turkeys have red eyes, because the little one opened his eyes. "We are almost all gone," said the little turkey at which all the turkeys that were left flew away, but when Wahunthinshiga tied up his bag it was full of the biggest turkeys, and he said, "Ha ha, this is the way to do when you want to eat."

When he got home he put the bag in the middle of the tent and said, "Grandmother, you must not open this bag what ever you do; don't you open it." "Why should I open it?" said his grandmother.

He went out to cut Hickory sticks on which to roast the turkeys before the open fire. When he had gone his Grandmother said, "I wonder what he has in that bag," saying which she opened the bag and one by one the turkeys flew up out

of the bag and out of the tent the way the smoke goes. The last turkey the grandmother got hold of by its two feet and she thought she had hold of two turkeys, so she said, "My grandchild, I have two turkeys," but it was only one. Wahunthinshiga saw the turkeys fly away from the tent and ran very hard back to the tent saying, "There, she has looked into the bag and has let the turkeys loose. Woo huuu, I told you not to look into the bag, why did you do so?"

"You have said the truth." replied the grandmother. "Grandmother, I am going to call the pawnees to a feast," and he put the turkey on a stick before the fire.

"You can sit at a distance, grandmother, and come in when they are gone" said Wahunthinshiga and then called out "A-zhun!" (Ash) pretending a Pawnee had come in response to his invitation and he was greeting him. Taking a stick and lifting up the door flap and letting it slam down over the doorway as though some one had come into the tent. he said, "No-wah! Hu thu ga sha." Welcome, sit down. to each imaginary Pawnee.

"Tashka-hi" (Oak) "Booda" (Pecan) "Hindahi" (Linden) "Nunsi" (Hickory) "Hata Zhunta" (Elm) and so on until all the names of the trees were called out and that is how all our trees came to be named.

As the name of each Pawnee was <sup>called</sup> and the old grandmother heard the stick of the doorflap slam down she thought

real Pawnees were going into the feast, but Wahunthinshiga had the feast of the turkey alone in the tent, and when he had picked the bones clean he put them together behind the par-fleche where his grandmother always sat.

Now in the <sup>autumn</sup>~~summer~~ time the mice gather wild beans and carry them to one place and walking so often to one place they make a little path called wazhunga. Wahunthinshiga made a great many wazhunga leading to the place where he had put the bones away.

Then he called to his grandmother, "Come in, the feast is over and the Pawnees are all gone." "Yes, my grandchild, I heard them as they went out of the tent" said the old grandmother. "I put some turkey away for you behind the par-fleche where you always sit." said Wahunthinshiga. The old grandmother was very glad as she drew out the turkey bones, and said, "My grandchild, the mice have eaten them all up" as she felt of the nice roads he had made leading to the bones he had put away. "I guess the mice must have eaten it up" said Wahunthinga.

(This part of the story used to almost break our hearts for the relation between grandmother and child was very close, and our little hearts were bursting with pity for the old grandmother and we were always better to our own grandmothers after the recital of this story.)



## How Wahunthinshiga Won the Races:

Once upon a time there was a great big, big village, but Wahunthinshiga and his grandmother lived outside of the village. They had one horse and one of its feet was very big and it was lame. The Cryer went through the village and said, "The Chief has said that the young men shall have a race and he who wins shall have the Chief's daughter."

"Grandmother, I shall enter the race for the Chief's daughter" said Wahunthinshiga.

"The people will laugh at you and play tricks on you; look at your horse and think it over." said his grandmother.

"I will go anyhow" said he and mounting the horse with the big foot he rode away.

When the people saw him, they looked at each other and laughed and said, "Look at him.! Look at him!"

He went and riding out of sight he stood by his horse for a long time. In a little while the horse became very beautiful and fat, and the young man became very good to look upon. He was dressed in fine buckskin shirt and leggings and a very beautiful pair of moccasins.

When the race started, Wahunthinshiga started the last one, but he passed them all and came out ahead. He went on and hid out of sight and went to his grandmother.



"One won the race, but he has gone!" called the Cryer.

Others said, "It was a fine young man upon a beautiful horse, but where is he?"

There were four races and he won each one of them in the same way and would hide. When the people searched the village and could not find him they said, "He was a fine young man but we cannot find him."

"Perhaps it was me" said Wahunthinshiga.

"You! Think of yourself when it was such a fine, fine young man" and they jostled him.

The young men were commanded to race again and the people to find out who the young man was.

Wahunthinshiga again entered the race. The horse was very lame and could scarcely walk without falling down. He again went out of sight as before and appeared in the race on a beautiful horse. Again he won and the people ran after him to find out who he was but they could not catch him.

They had four races and before the fourth race, the people told the Chief that they could not find out who the strange rider was. The Chief took out ten men and told them to stand watch in a certain place, for the young man and catch and hold him until the Chief came.

Wahunthinshiga was again transformed into a handsome young man. He painted himself with yellow earth and was good to look upon. When he reached a certain place the

ten men took hold of him and they found out that it was Wahunthinshiga, so they told the Chief who it was.

"Bring me my son-in-law" said the Chief, so ~~Wahun-~~  
*thishiga* married the Chief's daughter and the Chief gave them some  
beautiful and swift horses. Wahunthinshiga sent for his  
grandmother and they all lived together.

## Primitive Farming among the Omaha Indians.

(Written by Dr. Susan LaFlesche Picotte for the World Herald.)

The life of the primitive Indian was rich in ceremonials, beginning with the fifth day of infancy and continuing through the different stages of a man's growth until the earth closed over his form, for the object of the Tribal Organization was to carefully safe-guard by numerous rites and ceremonies, the life of its individual members.

These ceremonies were beautiful and symbolic, being all founded on the recognition of a Higher Creative Power and of man's dependence on this Power; they encompassed not only the moral, but the physical welfare of the people, tending to preserve their integrity and unity as a people.

So we find ceremonies attending the planting of the Maize and the chanting of a ritual for Corn was considered sacred and because it gave sustenance and nourishment to life, it was called "Mother" by the Omaha Indians.

Every household participated in the planting of the crops, for it was considered a sacred obligation on a man to support his family, and there was ridicule and contempt for a "gentleman of leisure".

This is the sacred legend of how Corn was given to my people by Wakanda, the Creator.

In the beginning when we became a people in the Big Star, there dwelt seven different tribes, but when Wakanda completed this world he permitted them to come down to this world.

When the foot of the first man touched this earth, the grass began to burn and a great smoke went upwards.

A young boy went out hunting for the gray black-bird with bow and arrows. He came to a great lake bordered by willows. As he made his way through the dense willows he looked up and saw a stalk of the great and wonderful corn. He gazed in wonder and saw first the tassel, then the joints, then the blades and last, two ears of corn growing one below the other. He ran swiftly home and said, "Father, come and see a strange thing I have found." When his father saw it he pulled up the corn plant by the roots and putting it over his shoulder he carried it home. He shelled the two ears and gave the corn to the Honga, Yellow Smoke's Band, who are the keepers of the Sacred Tents.

The Honga Band gave four grains of the corn to each household, and in the spring the husband and wife of each household prepared two mounds of earth and planted two kernels in each hill. This was the gift of Wakanda for our sustenance.

The planting and cultivation of the Corn was regulated by the Honga sub-gens, who were the keepers of the sacred Red Corn and conducted the ceremonies and chanted the ritual.

In the spring when the grass came up and "the oak leaves had uncurled to the size of rabbit's ears" the head of the Honga Band made a feast and called the Chiefs together to decide on the planting time. A crier was sent out to make the



rounds of the Village crying out, "They say it is time for you to plant."

A general invitation was sent out through the Crier to the people to "come and listen, they are going to sing the ritual of the Corn, and they want you to hear"; the people came in response from all directions, but it was particularly for the young men.

The men went out and selected their garden patch and put up a pole to hold their selection; after this ceremony the gens who kept the sacred Red Corn met with the Inkasaba Gens whose duty it was to provide the Red Corn.

The keepers conducted the ceremony and chanted the ritual, while the providers of the Red Corn acted as servers and distributed four grains of Red Corn to each household. The Red Corn was supposed to give new life to the seed corn and cause it to produce a good harvest. We know the color red is typical of life.

The providers of the Red Corn, the Inkasaba Gens, could never eat Red Corn- not even to this day- if they did it was said some great disaster would befall them. Should they eat it, the tribe would have none and suffer from the negligence of the providers, therefore this Gens considered it sacred and it was their tabu.

In the fall each household picked out the best of the Red Corn and took them to the Inkasaba Gens, the providers of

the sacred Red Corn seed, for seed. The Ritual Song of the Corn consists of many verses and it took hours to sing it.

In it the Corn calls to Man, telling him to hasten and behold the different stages of its growth into Life; first, "with firm roots I stand"-- "with one leaf I stand", two, up to seven; "with one joint I stand" up to seven; "with clothing I stand" and calls attention to first its glossy hair, its yellow hair, its dark hair; the glossy tassel, its pale tassel, its yellow tassel; "with fruit I stand possessed; pluck me, roast by fire my fruit, rip from the cob" and in the fulfillment of its mission says, "Eat me." The words of the Song may be found in the new book by Miss Alice C. Fletcher and Francis LaFlesche; "The Omaha Tribe", issued by the Bureau of Ethnology as its 27th Annual Report.

The man sings-- "I clear the land,-- I put in the Corn, the corn comes up; it has blades, the ears appear; I squeeze the corn to test the milk; it is ripe, I pull off the husks, I pull off the ear, I shell it, I eat it." These songs were sacred to the people and therefore they were forbidden to sing them, because they represented life and nourishment of the people.

A man could select his garden patch and hold it so long as he cultivated it and no one dreamed of molesting him, and his harvest was sacred for it represented life to him and

his family. These patches varied from half to three acres. I have seen many gardens in the sheltered places near the creeks.

Before planting, the corn was soaked all night with three or four buffalo apples or ground plums. Whether these were to preserve the corn or to keep gophers from eating the corn I do not know, but they served some such purpose. They were thrown away in the morning.

There were nine different kinds of corn planted; two kinds of White, soft and hard; Blue, soft and hard; Yellow, spotted, Red, Reddish Blue, Figured Corn as if painted in stripes; three kinds of sweet corn, a translucent white, a yellow and a blue which was soft, all maturing in August and an early squaw corn that matured in July were also raised.

The earth was pulverized and heaped into mounds a foot and a half to two feet long, the northern end being eighteen inches and slanting down till the south end was level with the ground; the peculiarity of the ground may have caused them to be built in this peculiar manner, for drainage or to make allowances for our gentle Nebraska zephyrs, I do not know. Later on a semi-circular trench was dug around one half of the mound to hold the water for irrigating the corn and the earth heaped up in a hill; these hills were two to three feet apart. From five to seven kernels of corn were planted in each hill. Sometimes beans were planted with the corn so they could climb up the stalks of the corn, then fewer kernels were planted.



The weeds were carefully removed by hand and the soil kept loose. After the corn was up the hoeing was done with the hoe, fashioned out of the shoulder blade of the elk, a pole for a handle being fastened to the blade by sinew. Later on with the advent of the white man, iron hoes were used. It was hoed a second time when it was a foot high and then left, for about this time the tribe went on the buffalo hunt.

In the fall when the corn was picked the seed corn was carefully selected and the husks were stripped downward, and braiding these together made long strings of corn that were hung up to dry in a safe place.

The Indians planted four kinds of beans; red, bluish black, yellow and spotted; all were climbers and poles were used for the vines to climb on; there was always a heavy yield of these beans. In the fall the beans were picked and placed in mounds and shelled by being beaten with willow poles and winnowed by being poured from wooden bowls held over the head and poured out. This was done on windy days so the chaff could be carried away. The beans were put in skin bags for winter use.

There was no need for suffragettes in those days for the produce of these gardens always belonged to the women.

Four kinds of squash were planted; real squash as they called it, which was greenish, round and slightly flat-



tened on the sides; a spotted variety, eaten immature; a white and dark blue stripped and scalloped one that had knots and lumps on it. Later on the white men brought the Hubbard and pumpkin, the latter never used by the Indians of that time.

Watermelons were planted when the plum blossoms were in bloom; in color they were stripped green; the seeds were black. Children always harvested this crop, sometimes before it was fully ripe.

Tobacco was raised but it was not a general crop. The leaves were as large as a man's hand, somewhat bluish, and when ripe were rolled and dried. My great-aunt, who died in 1894, at the age of 105, remembered her grandfather, the old Chief Blackbird, and was an eye-witness to the tragedy when the old man stabbed to death his favorite and beautiful young wife for unfaithfulness. He had gone to look at his growing tobacco and found there an ear-ring he had given her. the young lover came and handing a new gun to the old Chief, begged to be shot, for a suicide is against all tribal laws and is held in special abhorance. The wise old Chief took his revenge in letting the young man live in suffering. Barefoot, with earth on his head, the lover mourned alone for years, never mingling with the people, travelling alone until his sufferings were ended by the hand of the enemy in battle.

Beside each dwelling was a hole in the ground or cache for storing food, corn, beans, squash, buffalo meat, etc.

It was dug straight down eight feet, the entrance large enough enough to admit a person, with round bottom and sides.

Split posts were used to cover bottom and sides, with bunches of dried grass covering them; in shape it resembled a gourd, the mouth being covered by grass and sod. These caches were also built at intervals through the hunting country, to be used by the tribe in their annual journeys on the buffalo hunt to save carrying provisions, as horses cost two or three hundred dollars apiece, and many of the people travelled on foot.

Corn was prepared in different ways for food. In the summer evenings when the family circle gathered around the camp fire, the corn was roasted on the cob beside the coals, by turning over and over. While still in the milk the women would take and grate the corn, baking over the coals, making most delicious corn-bread, or the grated corn was folded in the green husks and baked in the ashes. Dry corn was shelled and parched over a fire; this was often carried in skin bags by hunters. It was easy to carry and with pounded meat or pemmican was concentrated nourishment.

A mortar about a foot high was made by hollowing out one end of a log, the closed end was rounded off and sharpened down to a point which was stuck firmly into the earth till the rounded bottom was even with the ground; in this the corn was pounded by a wooden pestle. The parched ground

corn was eaten mixed with wild honey and buffalo marrow, or mixed with wild cherried that had been pounded seeds and all.

The raw ground corn was made into a delicate gruel that was far more strengthening than most of the sawdust you eat for breakfast foods. The dried corn boiled with ashes that hulled it, made a hominy. Sometimes the dried corn without being hulled was cooked all day with meat and fat. Gruel cooked with beans, was hardened over night, and while on the march, if we children were hungry which was a chronic condition, we got a slice of this which was considered a delicacy. We never had to diet in those days; we were healthily hungry; dyspepsia was unknown until the white man brought his canned goods. Succotash was a summer dish, corn and beans in a green state cooked together with bits of fat meat.

Squash was prepared for winter use by peeling, cutting the flesh round and round into long strips, which were then hung out in the sun and air which dried in all the juices, and then braided into a wide strip. When eaten in winter it was full of flavor and sweetness.

While the aquaw corn was in milk it was snapped still green; a long trench was dug, wood was laid in, the corn in the green husks was laid on the wood, and the smothered fire generated steam that cooked the corn with all the juices in. When nearly done it was taken out, shelled and laid out to



dry. It was cooked with fat and meat in the winter and tasted almost like fresh corn.

Later on in the 70's, when a politician needed a job and the Government did not know what to do with him, they sent him out to teach these people how to farm and be self supporting. I remember the disgust of the Indian who had to show him how to fix the reaper when it broke down. The Indians ceased to call on him for help when they found they "had to show him how". At this time they planted wheat, yellow corn, and potatoes, besides garden vegetables.

Since 1906, when temperance became the rule and not the exception, the Omahas have been farming on a larger scale and today are raising by their own exertion, wheat, barley, oats, and from three to seven thousand bushels of corn, besides numerous garden vegetables. At the County Fair in Walthill, 1910, Good Old Man, almost or more than ninety years old, received a prize for best corn and squash. Henrick Blackbird received three prizes, two on the best barley.

Conforming closely to the code of ethics and ceremonials laid down for him by the tribal organization, the Omaha became a man of fine physical development, clean in morals, of good health, and with a properly balanced amount of work and rest, lived at peace with his neighbors; with plenty for his family; content with his share of what he



needed and no more, of the gifts of God, and more nearly attained that goal which is the "universal pursuit of Mankind", Happiness.