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NOTES AND QUERIES

SOME HIDATSA AND MANDAN TALES. — I give in the following a few tales told among the Hidatsa and Mandans of the Fort Berthold Reservation in North Dakota, together with the story of how an Hidatsa name was acquired. The stories are not long and important myths, merely simple every-day tales, such as are told to the children by the old grandfather or grandmother.

The first three of the stories were related by John Hunts Along, a young Hidatsa Indian. The first story is a bit of more or less modern superstition. The last two stories were told by James Holding Eagle, a young Mandan.

1. There is a lake on the bottom-lands of the Missouri River between Shell Creek and Elbowoods on the reservation. The old people say that in the old days this lake was very deep. In those times there were people living in the lake, under the water. Many who passed there would hear the sound of voices, as the dwellers in the lake were talking or singing. Often also dogs were heard barking, and sometimes the sound of the war-drum came from under the water when the lake people were having their dances.

Now, this lake is only a few feet deep in the deepest places. The old people say that one of the missionaries put poison into the lake, and either killed the people there or made them go away. The poison also made the lake dry up and become shallow.

2. A long time ago there was a man who went out to the Bad Lands to catch eagles. He went up on the top of a high hill and dug his pit there. Then he got in and arranged the covering over the opening.

For a long time the people waited for him, and he did not come back, and finally his friends went out to look for him. When they came back, they said that some monster had come up through the earth to the bottom of the pit, had seized the man, and had pulled him down under ground. He was never seen again.

3. The third story related how the Indian name of the narrator, The-Man-who-stands-up-in-the-Air, was acquired. The name was purchased from the man's grandfather, together with a shield painted with a picture of the sun. The grandfather obtained the name in the following manner:—

One night while sleeping, he dreamed that he saw the sun standing a little way above the western horizon. As he looked, the sun became a man standing up in the air, and talked to him. The Sun-Man told him that he would help him in all that he undertook; he also told him many secrets, and told him how to make a big shield with the sun painted on it for his medicine. When the grandfather awoke, he took his name from this Sun-Man, and he made a shield as the man had directed.

After this the grandfather became a great medicine-man: he could make it rain or hail whenever he wished, and he could go into a fight and never be injured by the weapons of the enemy. Once when the Sioux were defeating the Hidatsa, he made a big hail-storm come up, which so frightened and confused the Sioux that they ran away.

4. A Skunk was travelling along his trail. At the other end a Bear was travelling, going toward the Skunk. Neither one knew that the other was

on the trail. They met; and the Skunk said, "You are on my trail. Step to one side!" The Bear said, "It is you that are on my trail. You must step aside." The Skunk answered, "No. You must get off." Then the Bear said, "I say, you must leave the trail. If you don't, I shall eat you up." Then the Bear began singing, "You are the one who is in my road. I wonder if skunk's flesh will taste bitter or sweet if I eat it!" Then the Skunk began to sing, "I wonder, if I should eat bear-meat, would it taste bitter or sweet!" Then the Skunk cast his scent in the Bear's eyes. The Bear began to cry out, and pluck at his eyes, and he got off the trail. Then the Skunk went on.

5. Some men went out one time to get into pits to catch war-eagles. As they were returning toward evening, one man stopped on the way and sat down. As he was looking around, he saw an eagle chasing a rabbit. The rabbit was running round and round in a circle, and every little while the eagle would make a swoop for him. At each swoop the eagle would come nearer to catching the rabbit. The rabbit kept drawing closer and closer to the man; and as the eagle made a last great swoop, the rabbit jumped into the man's lap, and the eagle failed to get him. Then the Eagle said to the man, "Put him down! I am hungry and want to eat him." The Rabbit said to the man, "Save me! If you do, I will make you very renowned." Then the Eagle said, "Put him down! I will help you. Whatever I say is true. My feet never touch the ground; and whatever I undertake, I never fail in it." The Rabbit answered, "It is true that my feet are on the ground; but whatever I attempt, I too succeed in." And the man saved the Rabbit, and the Rabbit made him powerful, and always helped him in times of trouble.

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