

PHOTO-HISTORIAN OF A VANISHING RACE

E. S. Curtis, of Seattle, Has Won a World-Wide Reputation as a Photographer of Indian Life.



NAVAJO CHIEF.



A TYPICAL ZUNI.

E. S. CURTIS, "the photo-historian of a vanishing race," as he has come to be known, has won distinction in a new and unusual field. He is engaged in collecting and preserving for present use and future ages original material for the history of a race of men whose fate it has been to be outcasts in their native land; a race which, under the withering touch of civilization, is destined to vanish from the face of the earth. It is said that history has never recorded a more touching and melancholy story than that of the Indians of North America, but their history as told by the Curtis pictures lacks that pitiful strain, and shows them as they actually are.

Goes Where the Indian Lives.

The best possible material for Indian history is found in Mr. Curtis' pictures of their men, women and children; of their forest and desert homes and surroundings; of their camps, fetes and festivals; their implements of the chase and of war; and of all that goes to make up the everyday life of such a people. To gather such pictures he goes where the Indian lives. He makes his studios in the forest and on the plains; in the wilds of Alaska and along the shores of Puget Sound; in the hopfields and on the reservation—whether in the Dakotas, Montana or in the burning sands of the far south deserts. Wherever Indians are to be found in their natural habitat he seeks them out and pictures their lives from day to day. Never before has such an intelligent and systematic sifting and selection of material in so complete a form the rich and varied materials scattered all over the country and so necessary for a pictorial history of the Indian race. The Government is doing its best to educate the Indian and give him an equal chance with the white man. One generation of education does not fit an Indian to cope with a race which has generations after generations of learning behind it, but it does totally unfit him to live the life of the savage, and it is particularly this latter phase of Indian life which makes the Curtis pictures rare and deeply interesting from an ethnological standpoint. Savagery is a phase of Indian life which it might be said is disappearing with the present generation.

The two lectures which Mr. Curtis gave here Thursday and Friday nights, under the auspices of the Mazamas, were illustrated by some wonderful stereoscopic views, including many of the religious rites and tribal dances of the Moquit, Zuni, Navajo and White Mountain and Jicarilla Apaches. These are all Pueblo Indians, and their history, as told by these pictures, seems to step out of the middle ages. Their wild and picturesque homes on the rocky mesa of the southern desert give them an air of the romantic which is followed up in their peculiar dress and handicraft.

Mr. Curtis Tells of His Pictures.

"The purpose of my pictures," Mr. Curtis explained, "is to show in each group or tribe the type, male and female, child and adult; home structure, handicraft, dress, ceremonies, games, life, manners and environment, so that future generations can see what this fast-disappearing people were like."
I asked him if he had any difficulty in gaining the confidence of the various tribes which he visited, and how he managed to overcome their natural dislike and superstition regarding a camera.
"Money will overcome most any superstition," he laughingly replied; "and with children, candy will do the work so long as their parents are out of sight. In many cases I am permitted to photograph the adults of a family, but the children are bundled off into a dark corner and kept religiously out of my sight."
"I had one funny experience with the Jicarilla Apaches," he continued. "They are a wild, fierce, untamed lot, and their ceremonies are the most hair-raising of any which I have visited. For color, noise and thrills, the Jicarilla feast differs in superiority to anything in the Indian ceremony line, and it was to witness

this that I went to great trouble and expense to visit their reservation in an out-of-the-world part of New Mexico. I arrived at the site of the dance two days ahead of the ceremony, and found a number of these Apaches already in camp. As I approached with my outfit an old buck stuck his head outside his tepee and gave the most peculiar howling noise I ever heard emit from a human throat. It sounded like a discordant note of a hoarse coyote, and in another second the fellow in the next tent repeated the music. This was taken up from tent to tent until every crazy Indian there was howling like a wild beast. I asked my interpreter what it meant, and he said: "Why they don't want you here."

Makes Peace With Indians.

This commotion which I had raised was equal to a hornet's nest, so I immediately decided to seek out the chief and make my peace with him. I paid him a visit and tried to make him think I was of much importance and closely in touch with things at Washington and that he wouldn't dare make me any trouble, so he called a conference of his headmen, and they finally decided to let me stay, although one burly old fellow drew out of the consultation and declared he would make me trouble. I had to keep my eyes open for him all the while I remained on the reservation, but I managed to get some fine pictures and get away unharmed. I found that up to the time of my visit no photographer who was openly making pictures had been allowed at this ceremony.

Held Up by a Governor.

"While Anomas is one of the most picturesque and beautiful spots I ever saw, it was a most irritating place to attempt to get pictures. On first going to the village the Governor sent his interpreter to me saying that I would have to pay \$1 for myself and \$1 for each of my party and \$5 for each camera. If I was going to make pictures. After talking this over while I asked him to bring the Governor himself, thinking I might impress him with my importance and get a reduction in his demands. The Governor and I had a long, dignified talk with the interpreter, the outcome being that he got the best of every argument. So I paid my money and thought the matter settled, and was naturally surprised, after this long conversation through an interpreter, to hear him say in perfectly good English: 'All right—you go ahead and make pictures.'"

"The following morning I made three pictures, when one of his lieutenants came and told me to stop. I explained that I had paid the Governor for the privilege and was going to make all I wished. Soon he returned, saying the Governor thought I had made enough for the money I had paid, so I must stop. As I had planned to make pictures of that particular village for a week or 15 days, the price of \$5 per camera every 15 minutes did not look good to me, so I kept on trying, but all day long it was a continual argument with the Indian police and the Governor's lieutenants. I tried it again the next day, but finally they told me that I not only had to stop but had to leave the village, so there was nothing to do but go. I found out afterwards that they were getting ready for a sacred dance which no white person had ever witnessed, so perhaps the next time I go there they will not be so snaking.

The Snake Dance of the Moquit.

"I secured a set of films for the biograph at the last dance, but mind you this was only the ninth or last day's ceremony. The other eight days are confined to secret ceremonies which are conducted in underground cells and which no white man has witnessed. However, I have been out afterwards that they were getting ready for a sacred dance which no white person had ever witnessed, so perhaps the next time I go there they will not be so snaking.

I implored Mr. Curtis to tell me something about this ceremony, he told me witnessed the pictorial reproduction of it

and as he answered questions about pictures he gave an interesting account of it between times.

A Nine-Day Ritual Ceremony.

"The Yebichai ceremony is a nine-day ritual ceremony for the curing of diseases, the ninth or final day terminating in the public all-night dance. A person ordinarily speaking of the Yebichai dance refers to the final day and night. It is only the student who would care to observe the whole nine days and nights. When I say 'for the curing of disease,' I should say for the curing of those who have some long-standing ailment, or an imaginary one. For acute illness other and simpler ceremonies are practiced. With the Navajos all ceremonies are termed 'sings,' and the medicine men 'singers.' They have one-day sings, two-day sings, in fact, any number of days up to the great nine-day ceremony of the Yebichai and the Hoskon, or, as termed by Mathews, the Night Chant and the Mountain Chant.

The Yebichai ceremony which I witnessed was held near the mouth of Canyon de Chelly last Autumn. Both the Yebichai and the Hoskon dance are not held until after frost, which means that they are Fall or Winter ceremonies. I also saw a number of other Yebichai ceremonies, one in Canyon de Chelly, which was, from its strange situation, a very striking affair.

"The ritual ceremony for the whole nine days is held in what is called the medicine hogan. This hogan is usually built for a certain sing, and never used a second time. This is not necessarily so, as in Canyon de Chelly there is a hogan which has been used many times; in fact, it is almost crumbling with age. I arrived at the mouth of the canyon the day before the beginning of this ceremony. The hogan was completed. It had been built by the patient and his friends, watched over and assisted by the singer. On the day of my arrival I made my arrangements with the singer. The understanding was that I was to have access to the hogan at all times and see all ceremonies, and that I was to be given all necessary information, that what I might write would be from memory. According to their superstition, no one can see the hogan or secret ceremonies who is not a member of the Yebichai order. I agreed to be initiated, and the fact of my being a Yebichai proved of great assistance to me later at other ceremonies. Wherever I went, as soon as it was known that I was a Yebichai, the Navajo would simply nod his head and say 'bueno.'"

The Ceremony Begins.

"The first day's ceremony is brief; a small number of assisting singers and a few spectators. The day is spent in preparation of medicine paraphernalia, and shortly after dark participants and spectators begin to gather at the hogan. The singers, or what one might term the chorists, are grouped in the back part of the hogan, the spectators crowded in closely about its walls. In the center is a small fire, which warms and illuminates the room. The men who are to impersonate the deities in this first ceremony remove their clothing, paint their bodies, wrap a blanket about them, take their masks and go out into the darkness. They are scarcely out of the hogan before the patient comes in, sits on a blanket at the back of the hogan, removing his clothing.

"The masked deities come in one at a time, performing their part of the ceremony over the patient. One of the first things the spectator will notice is that each movement is a movement by fours. Practically all parts of the ritual ceremony repeats itself four times, and all movements are from the four cardinal points, beginning at the east, making a circle by the south, then at the south, west, north. The cardinal colors are east, white; south, blue; west, yellow; north, black. Each deity as he performs over the patient utters a big whoop, something like the call of the coyote and termed by the Yebichai call. The deity will press his hands on the patient's chest, give his hoop, repeating it four times, then his right shoulder, again repeating his Yebichai call the four times, next his back, and then his left shoulder.

"Shortly after midnight the ceremonies close and all depart to their camps. No, I should not say all; the chief singer and the patient sleep in the hogan such portions of time as are given to sleep, and I also would occasionally get a chance for a nap, although usually, in my case, with one eye open for fear something would be going on and I would miss it.

The Sweating Ceremony.

"At sunrise the second day begins the ceremonial sweat. This sweating is continued every morning for four days, and the regular order of cardinal points is observed, east, south, west, north. It seems to be optional with the singer whether this sweating is in a regularly

constructed lodge or hogan, or in blankets. In this instance the blanket method was used. A shallow hole or trench, the length of the body, was dug. In this was piled and spread an amount of hot coals. The coals were covered a few inches in depth by spruce boughs. The boughs were sprinkled with water, after which the patient disrobed and stretched himself on this steaming bed of boughs. He was now covered with a heavy blanket and the edges snugly packed in. While he is taking his place in the sweat, the singers begin their chanting, which continues for 15 or 20 minutes. The singer then lifts the corner of the blanket and gives the patient a drink of a prepared medicine from one of the ceremonial baskets, after which the patient is again tucked in and the singing goes on. In fact, the

Singing has scarcely ceased.

"I remarked to Charley I thought the patient was napping a little, as he would occasionally raise the blanket a trifle, apparently to get a breath of cool air. Charley looked at me and remarked, 'If you were under there you would nig a good deal; while it is, in fact, only a little over half an hour, it seems a lifetime.' I asked him if he knew from experience. He assured me that he did. I had before suspected that he had been the Yebichai patient in times past, but this was the first time I had succeeded in getting him to say anything which would convince me. He is, without doubt, the only white man who has been a patient in this ceremony, and, as far as I am concerned, he is perfectly welcome to the distinction."
"At last the blanket is lifted, the

deities perform over the patient,

rubbing his body with medicine, then retire to the hogan, the patient clothing himself and also going inside. "The whole ceremony has taken perhaps three hours. "During this, the second day, some time is given to the preparation of medicine paraphernalia, and the young men spend considerable time preparing and smoothing the ground in front of the hogan where the final night's dance is to be given. Shortly after dark the regular night ceremony begins. Tonight is the night of the cigarette and stick sacrifices to the gods. These sacrifices have been prepared during the day, and are in one of the medicine baskets. "Concluded on Far



A MASKED DITTY IN THE YEBICHAI CEREMONY.



A HOPI BELLE.