

Indian Songs - Personal Studies of Indian Life

by Alice C. Fletcher (1838-1923)

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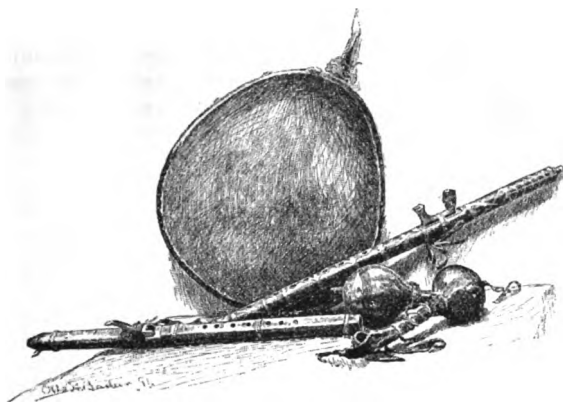
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INDIAN SONGS.

PERSONAL STUDIES OF INDIAN LIFE.



ONE sunny September morning a dozen years ago, as I looked from my tent over the Dakota prairie, I saw the Indian crier emerge from the lodge of the chief. He was an old man, with wrinkled face and hooked nose, a red scarf bound about his scanty locks, and his green blanket drawn together over his bent shoulders as he leaned heavily upon his long oak staff. I watched him as he passed from one vantage-point to another, whence he could overlook the various groups of tents clustered upon the swiftly flowing creek; and I heard his sonorous voice calling the people to assemble at night-fall in the great tent. As the old man's shout broke the silence, women looked from their lodges, a bit of embroidery in their hands, or a screaming child hastily caught up, while the men turned lazily on the grass, or paused in their talk, to look up at the herald and to catch his message. This message was an invitation from the son of the old chief Spotted Tail, whose guest I was at that time, and who was pleased to gratify my desire to see an Indian dance.

The great tent was nearly a mile distant, reached by a trail that wound around and over the sharply broken undulations of the prairie, crossing and re-crossing the noisy creek and its many branches, which, sometimes narrow enough to leap over, again ran swift and wide, bridged often by a smooth, round trunk of a small tree, upon which a moccasined foot could cling, but where a booted one could find little hold. As I set forth with my Indian guide, the sun was well down in the west, its slanting rays giving a deeper yellow to the wide stretch of

tall grass unbroken even by the shadow of a solitary tree. My guide strode ahead, and I followed as best I could, my ear alert to catch the rattle of a disturbed snake, and my eyes intent upon the trail, lest I should fall headlong down the steep, muddy sides of the creek, or slide off the log bridge into the rushing stream below. Fortunately, I escaped all disasters, and forgot their possibility as the sound of a distant drum reached my ear. It betrayed the vicinity of the camp, which a grass-covered knoll still concealed from my sight, but at a sudden turn of the trail we were in the midst of a picturesque group of white cone-shaped tents, among which, and over-topping them all, rose the sharp outlines of the great reception-tent, about the entrance of which were gathered gala-dressed people resplendent in red, green, and yellow blankets. The tent cover was thrown back, exposing the tall trim poles, cut in the forests of the Black Hills, and within, at the right of the entrance, I saw men and women seated about the drum, which was supported a few inches above the ground upon four sticks, and, farther along, around the tent, were crouched many men closely muffled in their robes. Following my guide, I picked my way through the crowd, and became separated from my one companion, an Indian matron, my ever faithful friend, a Ponka who had come with me from her own tribe. No words of mine could persuade her to pass with me into the tent, so I was forced to follow the guide alone. As I entered I was startled by a sudden mighty beating of the drum, with such deafening yells and shouts that I feared my ears would burst; but following the dictates of Indian etiquette, I took no notice of this extraordinary welcome, and passed as calmly as I could to the back of the tent, where I sat down in the middle of an

unoccupied space, close to the edge of the covering.

As I looked about me, I felt a foreignness that grew into a sense of isolation. On each side were lines of silent, motionless figures, their robes so closely wrapped about them that, in the fading light, I could scarcely realize that they were living beings. There was not a touch of color within the tent, except upon the few women who sat near the drum. Their glossy black braids fell in heavy loops upon their red and green tunics, the russet hue of their faces was heightened by touches of vermillion upon the cheeks, their ear-ornaments of white shell hung nearly to their waists, and their arms were encircled with shining brass bangles. These glints of brightness only added to the weirdness of the place, and my eyes gladly looked beyond, where, framed by the opening of the tent against the pale primrose of the twilight sky, I saw the contrasting picture of gaily dressed and painted men and women, chatting or laughing, and showing their small white teeth.

The whole scene was utterly unlike anything I had ever beheld. I was oppressed with its strangeness, and before I could find any starting-point of sympathy with my surroundings there was a slight stir in the vicinity of the drum, and suddenly half a dozen arms rose and fell upon the drum with such force as to make it rebound upon its fastenings; a solitary voice, pitched high and shrill, uttered a few wavering notes, followed on the next drum-beat by the whole company of singers, each one apparently striving to out-sing all the rest. It was nothing but tumult and din to me; the sharply accented drum set my heart to beating painfully and jarred every nerve. I was distressed and perplexed, my head was ringing, and I was fast becoming mentally distraught, when, as if by magic, a dozen of the silent, mysterious figures sprang high in the air, their robes falling in a heap, as with bended arms and knees they leaped toward the center of the tent, each man in full undress, save for the breech-cloth, paint, and feathers. The sudden appearance, the wild movements of the advancing and retreating forms, the outlines of the violently shaken head-feathers, the out-stretched arms brandishing the war-clubs, and the thud of the bare feet upon the ground, called up before me every picture of savages I had ever seen; while every account of Indian atrocities I had ever heard crowded upon my memory, and gave a horrible interpretation to the scene before me. I would have escaped if I could, but between me and the opening were these terrible creatures, and even if it were possible to elude their grasp, it would be only to fall into the hands of hundreds more outside; those "treach-

erous," gaily dressed, and laughing people were "Indians," who even now might be transforming into similar fiends. The ground was cold and solid beneath me, and the tent was pegged tight to it, with no crack to crawl through. My suffering grew intense during the few moments before I was able to come to myself, and to remember that I was there present by my own deliberate purpose to study this very performance then going on around me.

I have since had many a laugh with my red friends over this my first and only fright, caused, as I now know, by the unconscious influence of the popular idea of "Injuns"; but it was long after this initiation before my ears were able to hear in Indian music little besides a screaming downward movement that was gashed and torn by the vehemently beaten drum. However, as the weeks wore on, and I observed the pleasure the Indians took in their own singing, I was convinced that there existed something which was eluding my ears. I therefore began to listen below this noise, much as one must listen in the phonograph, ignoring the sound of the machinery in order to catch the registered tones of the voice. I have since watched Indians laboring with a like difficulty when their songs were rendered to them upon the piano; their ears were accustomed to the *portamento* of the voice in the song, which was broken up by the hammers of the instrument on the strings, producing such confusion of sound that it was hard for them to recognize the tune.

After I had relegated the noise of the drum and the straining of the voice to their proper place, I encountered fresh difficulties—difficulties which were born of the prevalent idea concerning the music of "savages"; namely, that while such music might possess a certain degree of simple rhythm, it had little melody, the few tones used being iterative, and expressionless of thought or feeling. The songs I heard lay athwart this opinion, and could not be made to coincide with it, and for a considerable time I was more inclined to distrust my own ears than to question the generally accepted theory. Meanwhile the Indians sang on, and I faithfully noted their songs, studying their character and their relation to Indian life and ceremonial. During these investigations I was stricken with a severe illness, and lay for months, ministered to in part by my Omaha friends. While I was thus shut in from all the world, the Indians coming and going about me in their affectionate solicitude, they would often at my request sing for me. They sang softly because I was weak, and there was no drum, and then it was that the last vestige of the distraction of noise and the confusion of theory was dispelled, and the sweetness, the beauty, and the meaning of these songs were revealed to me. As I grew stronger

I was taught them, and sang them with my Indian friends; and when I was able to be carried about, my returning health was celebrated by the exemplification of the Wa-wan ceremony with its music.

The ceremony was to take place in a large earth lodge two or three miles distant. I was laid in the bottom of a wagon, and driven along the bluffs of the Missouri River, overtaking men and women and children on their ponies, all headed toward the lodge, where we arrived just as the sun dropped like a red ball below the horizon. A few old men were sitting on the dome-like roof, while boys and dogs chased one another up and down the grassy, flowery sides of the picturesque dwelling. At the door of the long projection forming the entrance to the lodge stood friends ready to welcome me. I was lifted carefully from the wagon-bed, borne by strong arms within, and placed on a sort of lounge made of skins arranged nearly opposite the entrance. The people gathered by scores, until between two and three hundred were seated around the central fire, which leaped up brightly, making the blackened roof of poles shine like polished ebony. Every one was glad, and greeted me with no uncertain word or glance. Soon I heard the cadences of the ceremonial Song of Approach. I knew the tune; I had been taught it in my sickness, and now I listened understandingly to the familiar strains as they came nearer and nearer, until the bearers of the Pipes of Fellowship were seen coming down the long entrance-way, waving the feather pendants of the calumets they bore. As they turned into the lodge, the whole company took up the song, and I too joined, able at last to hear and comprehend the music that had through all my difficulties fascinated even while it eluded me. The occasion of this exemplification was one I can never forget, not only because of the insight it gave me into the music of the people, and the meaning of the ceremony I witnessed, but because of its deeper revelation of the heart and inner life of the Indians. From that time forth I ceased to trouble about theories of scales, tones, rhythm, and melody, and trusted the facts which daily accumulated in my willing hands.

I have transcribed several hundreds of Omaha songs, and a considerable number of Ponka, Otoe, and Dakota melodies, these tribes being of the same linguistic stock. The Pawnees and the Nez Percés are of different stocks, and widely removed, yet, though they show differences that invite further study, there is nothing in their songs radically divergent from the music of the Omahas.

Indian songs, I have discovered, travel far, and those of one tribe are soon at home in another. There seems to have been an

extended acquaintance between tribes, the Rocky Mountains proving no serious barrier. Customs and songs borrowed from the Crow Indians of Montana have been current for a century, at least, among the Nez Percés of Idaho. Dakota songs are also found there with an equally remote introduction. The Omahas have borrowed from the Dakotas and the Otoes, and the Dakotas and the Winnebagos have appropriated Omaha songs. One fact is noticeable—that a song is always credited to the tribe that originated it, never being claimed as a native product in the home of its adoption.

In every tribe there are hundreds of original songs which are its heritage. Many of them have been handed down through generations, and embody not only the feeling of the composer, but record some past event or experience; they are treasured by the people, and care is taken to transmit them accurately. People who possess written music have some mechanical device by which a tone may be uniformly produced, as by the vibrations of a cord of given length and tension, the tone becoming the standard by which all others can be regulated; and a succession of tones can be recorded and accurately repeated at long intervals of time, and by different persons. The Indians have no mechanism for determining a pitch; there is no uniform key for a song; it can be started on any note suitable to the singer's voice. This absence of a standard pitch, and the Indians' management of the voice, which is similar in singing and in speaking, make Indian music seem to be out of tune to our ears, conventionally trained as they are to distinguish between the singing and the speaking tone of voice. Although the Indians have no fixed pitch, yet, given a starting note, graduated intervals are observed. Not that any Indian can sing a scale, but he repeats his songs without any material variation. Men with good voices take pride in accuracy of singing, and often have in their memories several hundred songs, including many from tribes with the members of which they have exchanged visits.

The barytone voice among men, and the mezzo-soprano among women, are more common than the pure tenor, bass, contralto, or soprano. As a rule, the Indian voice is reedy and steady in tone, and sometimes quite melodious in quality; but the habit of singing in the open air to the accompaniment of percussion instruments tends to strain the voice and to injure its sweetness. There is little attempt at expression by *piano* or *forte* passages, or by swelling the tone on a given note; but as the songs generally descend on the scale, there is a natural tendency to less volume at the close than at the beginning or middle part of the tune.

Where several take part in the singing, it is



ENGRAVED BY M. HAIDEL.

THE DEATH-SONG.

Illustrated by Wm. T. H. Smith.

always in unison. The different qualities of male and female voices bring out harmonic effects, which are enhanced by the women's custom of singing in a high, reedy falsetto, an octave above the male voices. The choral generally presents two or three octaves, and one becomes conscious of overtones. Evidently the Indians enjoy this latent harmony, as they have devices to intensify it. They employ a kind of throbbing of the voice on a prolonged note, producing an effect similar to that obtained in vibrating a string of the cello by passing over it the bow in an undulating movement. In solos like the love-song, where there are sustained passages, the singer waves his hand slowly to and from his mouth to break the flow of the breath and to produce vibrations which seem to satisfy his ear.

With the Indian the words of a song are to a considerable extent subservient to the music; even the entire absence of words does not seem to render a tune meaningless to him, while words clearly enunciated break the melody and disturb his enjoyment of the song. More than once Indians have commented on our music, saying, "You talk a great deal as you sing." In lieu of words the Indians use syllables composed of vowels both open and nasal, modified by an initial consonant, as *h*, or *y*, for instance, *hæe*, *ha*, *he*, *ho*, *hi*, *hu*. Songs in which the syllables begin with *h* are gentle in character, and *y* is employed when warlike or derisive feeling is to be expressed. When a series of syllables such as *nae*, *tho*, *hæe*, *yoh*, are given slowly upon one note by many voices, the effect is more pleasing and suggestive of harmony than a single clear vowel sound so sustained. Syllables are sometimes introduced between parts of a word where its own vocables would have broken and injured the cadence. At the end of a phrase the singers draw their breath audibly through their closed teeth, making a sound as when the wind sweeps over fallen leaves.

The native ear is precise as to time; a retard occurs only in the mystery-, dream-, and love-songs; in any other, a variation of the value of a thirty-second or sixty-fourth of a beat is sufficient to throw the tune out of gear to the Indian. Syncopation is common, and the ease with which an Indian will sing syncopated passages in three-four time to the two-four beat of the drum is remarkable. One of our own race could hardly do this without careful training and much practice. An Indian's ear is as keen for time as his eye for tracks in the forest. Musical instruments are limited in number. The "flute" is used principally by the young man whose "fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love." It is like a clarinet, the breath being propelled through an opening at one end,

and the tones regulated by six finger-stops. It is capable of a scale of seven notes, but absence of a standard pitch renders the uniform tuning of instruments impossible, and flutes, therefore, vary much in scales and clearness and in pleasantness of tone.

The whistle is made from the wing-bone of the eagle or the wild turkey, and has three finger-stops, by which five shrill notes can be made. It is used only in religious ceremonies.

The drums which accompany mystery- and dream-songs are small, like tambourines in shape, and are beaten in tremolo by the finger, or a small reed. Formerly others were made from sections of a tree, hollowed out, over the open end of which a skin was stretched; and they were tuned by partly filling with water, the skin being moistened, strained, and dried to the desired tone. Large circular drums were formed by stretching a calfskin over a hoop of withes. In some ceremonies a rawhide served as a drum, the women being the drummers. The rhythm of the drum is usually a strong beat followed by a light one, like a rebound, although sometimes each beat is regular and equal in volume.

Rattles of dried gourds, loaded with fine or coarse gravel, according to the desired tone, are used in the accompaniment to religious songs. They are shaken in tremolo, or sharp accentuations.

All Indian songs are in a setting of color and action; it may be the "sweeping vale and flowing flood" that bear along the melody, or the brilliant pendants of the Fellowship Pipes waved to the rhythm of the song in the dancing firelight of the lodge, or the cadences springing from the circle of tents amid the movements of horsemen. Every song rises replete with the life of the people, speeding from heart to heart in beauty and power; unheralded by opening chords it chants forth its theme of love, woe, valor, or worship, and is gone almost before we can catch its burden.

Indian music pervades every religious, tribal, and social ceremony, as well as every personal experience. There is not a phase of life that does not find its subjective expression in song. Religious rituals are imbedded in it, and the reverent recognition of the creation of corn, of the food-giving animals, of the powers of the air, and the fructifying sun, is passed from one generation to another in melodious measures. Song nerves the warrior to deeds of heroism, and robs death of its terrors; it speeds the spirit to the land of the hereafter, and solaces those who live to mourn. Children compose ditties for their games, and young men add music to give zest to their sports. The lover sings his way to the maiden's heart, and the old man

DANCE-SONG. (HAE-THU-SKA.)

MM. $\text{♩} = 116.$

Ne - ka me - ta wa-gan-tha te-bae-no, Ne - ka me-ta wa-gan - tha

te-bae-no, Ne-ka me-ta wa-gan-tha te-bae-no, Ne-ka me-ta wa-gan - tha

te-bae-no, Ne-ka me-ta wa-gantha te-bae-no..... tho. Nu-da-hun-ga

Ish - e-buz-zhe tha-da be-thin kae - dae. Ne-ka me-ta wa-gan-tha te-bae - no,

Ne-ka me-ta wa-gan-tha te-bae-no, Ne-ka me-ta wa-gan-tha te-bae-no.

tunefully invokes those agencies which can avert disaster and death.

It is through the mystery-song that the Indian believes himself able to reach beyond the visible world, and to grasp succor from the unseen and potential forces which encompass him. This song has come to him in a vision after days and nights of fasting and supplication, and, remaining ever after in his memory, it will summon to his aid the supernatural help assured by the vision. Those who in their visions have seen the same type of life become affiliated into societies; for instance, those who have seen the bear will belong to the bear society. The revelation to these men of the power of life in the form of a bear proves them to be of a similar cast of mind—the real basis of affiliation. The song of the vision, although remaining the individual property of the member who received it, becomes also in a sense the property of the society.

The Indians, like our Aryan ancestors, believed that they could, by a musical spell, force nature to their will, even to the darkening of the sun, or to the restoring of the parched earth by kindly showers; and our English-speaking people have hardly yet divested themselves of the notion that certain combinations of sounds, as the ringing of consecrated bells, have a similar supernatural power. The presuming Hindu who ventured unauthorized to sing the sacred numbers of the Rig-Veda was consumed by fire, even though he stood to his neck in the river Jumna; so also, among the American Indians, lightning would destroy him who should profane a sacred song.

The thunder-songs—those that came with visions of thunder—were potent not only in bringing and dispelling storms, but in raising the ire of the thunder gods to punish wrongdoing in the tribe. I have watched the changing countenance and strained attention of my Indian companions when the distant throbbing drum accompaniment of one of these songs caught their ear. Sometimes nine old men, all thunder dreamers, would walk solemnly about the village of tents, and, with drums and bells, sing one of these fearsome songs: "The thunder gods are encompassing the camp, making themselves fearful to men." Then all the people knew that the gods were near, and the self-accused guilty ones would hide their heads in terror lest the lightning stroke should find them out.

Mystery-songs were also sung in the sweat lodge ceremonies, through which purification was sought, or help in trouble implored; the punishment of an unintentional sacrilegious act warded off, or foretold death averted.

In the Omaha myth of the introduction of death into the world, the hero Ha-hae-ga

warns his younger brother of some undefined impending danger, and urges him not to venture from his tent. Ha-hae-ga then goes forth to hunt, and, returning, finds his brother gone. In apprehension he follows the youth's footprints to the water's edge and out upon the ice, until at a broken place the tracks all disappear. The tears of Ha-hae-ga, pouring down, form streams as he wanders about seeking his brother, inquiring of all the animals he meets, punishing those which give him no aid, and rewarding the helpful ones. Finally he discovers the abode of the water monsters who have destroyed his brother, and by stratagem gains admission, kills the creatures, and carries off all that remains of his brother—his dried skin. Ha-hae-ga then constructs a sweat lodge, using serpents instead of boughs for the framework, the serpents thrusting their tails into the ground and twisting their necks together to support the air-tight covering. Ha-hae-ga, while he gathers stones, appeals in song to the spirit in them for aid, and as he kindles the fire about them, he beseeches help also of the Power of Fire; then entering the lodge, and taking with him his brother's skin, he pours water upon the heated stones, and again sings his prayers. Four times does Ha-hae-ga do this, begging his brother to return; at last the skin replies: "Ah, my brother, why call me back? Death is far better"; whereupon, in chagrin, Ha-hae-ga turns his brother into a stone, himself becomes a wolf, and death has entered the world.

Wolf-songs were sung by the warrior when he went forth on his mission of death. He speaks of himself as a wolf: "Like the wolf, I do not find myself strange or afraid when I venture far in distant lands." But brave as is the Indian warrior, he is but human, and homesickness will sometimes make his war-path more difficult than hardships and dangers. There is an Omaha wolf-song which opens in stirring measure with warlike syllables, then drops into gentle movement with words picturing the "women at the spring," "gathering wood for the home fire," and "chatting and laughing among the trees," while the footsore singer "walks forlorn"; but "he is a man and must endure," so the song returns to the rhythm and syllables of its beginning.

Another class of war-songs was sung in hours of immediate danger; many of them refer to the women of the tribe, who are always spoken of as "sisters." "Hae, friend! let us go to the rescue; your sisters are in danger. Let us walk bravely; hae, friend!" The sisters are not forgetful of their defenders; there are many songs pleasing in melody composed by women, and sung by them in the belief that help can thus be conveyed to warriors in the field. When the men returned, songs of triumph were sung,

LOVE-SONG.

Fades the star of morning, West winds gen - tly blow, gen - tly blow, gen - tly blow,

Soft the pine-trees mur - mur, Soft the wa - ters flow, Soft the wa - ters flow,

Soft the wa - ters flow. Lift thine eyes, my maid-en, To the hill-top nigh;

Night and gloom will van - ish, When the pale stars die, When the pale stars die,

When the pale stars die: Lift thine eyes, my maid-en, Hear thy lov - er's cry.

and women sometimes carried the tune alone, the men joining in a sort of chorus. These songs are spirited in movement, and the words descriptive. The rhythm of one in my collection suggests the waving of the tall prairie grass through which a warrior is creeping upon his prey, and interwoven among warlike syllables are the words, "Little Sioux, I seek your good horses!"

Of those Indian societies whose membership was composed entirely of warriors, the Omaha Hae-thu-ska Society was one of the most noted. Its songs and dramatic dances have been adopted by many tribes. It was at an exhibition of the dance of the Hae-thu-ska among the Dakotas, where it was called the Omaha, or Grass Dance, that I received my initiation. The opening ceremonies at each meeting of

the Hae-thu-ska were of a religious nature, and the songs were choral; so also was that which closed the evening. With these exceptions, the numerous songs were historical, having been composed to commemorate some valiant deed done by a member of the society. The story of the song was handed down with the music, thus constituting the archives of the society, and preserving a partial history of the tribe.

In the song which often accompanies the dramatic dance of the Hae-thu-ska, the words refer to a traditional hero — Ish-e-buz-zhe. A very old man who died in 1884, and whose statements were confirmed by other aged persons, told me that the grandfather of his grandfather when young had seen this hero, thus easily throwing the date of the song back into the seventeenth century. Ish-e-buz-zhe seems to have been a queer sort of fellow; he was listless and absent-minded, but when roused to action his energy was slow to abate, and he became invincible. Many stories are told illustrative of his peculiarities. It was a custom of the people to lay aside their moccasins when they went out in the morning dew. Ish-e-buz-zhe, unmindful of the dampness of the hour, plunged through the wet grass regardless of the injury done his moccasins, and won in consequence a sharp reproof from his prudent wife, who did not like to have her handiwork needlessly destroyed. Accordingly the next morning Ish-e-buz-zhe dutifully placed his moccasins in his belt, and walked barefooted through the dew; but as the day advanced, he continued to carry the moccasins until his feet were sore with travel, and he received a second reproach from his more thoughtful wife.

This song recites that when his camp was attacked Ish-e-buz-zhe lingered, sitting in his tent, while the foe pressed nearer and nearer, until at length the taunts of an old woman roused him from his inaction, and, rushing forth, he utterly destroyed the enemy. His name was used to scare children into good behavior, and "Ish-e-buz-zhe will come and take you" is still a common threat. There is a legend that once during his lifetime a mother thus frightened her child, thrusting it in jest out of the tent, when it was actually seized from her arms by the warrior himself, who chanced to be passing at the moment. The genuine terror of both mother and child lingers as a bit of nursery lore to the present day.

In the myths that were told around the winter fire, animals were often personified, and sang bits of song, which were borrowed by the children and fashioned into plays. When Wa-hon-e-she-ga, the hero of one of these myths, tries to capture the turkeys, he bids them form in a circle and dance with their eyes closed, while he sings, under the threat that if they open

their eyes they will become red. The turkeys obey. "Dance faster! dance faster! Spread your tails! spread your tails!" and he catches them one by one and puts them in a bag, until at length one ventures to peep, and alarms the rest of the blind turkeys, who open their eyes and flee in a panic. The children imitate the turkeys, improvising the spread tail and dancing in a circle, acting out the little drama, singing all the while the song to which in the myth the turkeys danced.

Children make songs for themselves, which are occasionally handed down to other generations. These juvenile efforts sometimes haunt the memory in maturer years. An exemplary old man once sang to me a composition of his childhood wherein he had tunelessly exalted the pleasures of disobedience; but he took particular care that his children should not hear this performance. Young men sing in guessing games, as they gamble with their companions, tossing from hand to hand a minute ball of buffalo hair or a small pebble, moving their arms to the rhythm of the music.

The lover's songs are tender in feeling, sometimes rising to passionate fervor of expression. Musical syllables are used with only few exceptions, and in these the words are little more than a picture of the morning hour — the hour when the lover makes his way to some high vantage-point whence he can watch the tent of his sweetheart, and see her if she ventures forth to the spring, where a happy chance may afford him a stolen interview. As the day dawns he pours forth his lay; the hour, the gathering color of the sky, the awakening birds, the stir of the morning breeze, are the accompaniment of the song. In the following poem Miss Edna Dean Proctor has accomplished a difficult task — that of translating with native grace an Indian love-song¹ in its entirety.

Fades the star of morning,
West winds gently blow,
Soft the pine-trees murmur,
Soft the waters flow.
Lift thine eyes, my maiden,
To the hill-top nigh;
Night and gloom will vanish
When the pale stars die:
Lift thine eyes, my maiden,
Hear thy lover's cry!
From my tent I wander
Seeking only thee,
As the day from darkness,
Comes for stream and tree.

¹ The following is a free translation of the Omaha words to this song:

As the day comes forth from the night,
So come I forth to seek thee.
Lift up thine eyes and behold him
Who comes with the day to thee.

FUNERAL-SONG.

MM. ♩ = 100.

The musical score is written for a funeral song. It consists of four systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The tempo is marked 'MM. ♩ = 100'. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The lyrics are written below the staves in a syllabic notation.

System 1:
 E ah tha ha ahee tha ha ah ha ah ah hae ah ah ah e tha ha ahee tha hae ah

System 2:
 ha ah ah. E tha ha ahee tha ah e ah ha ae ha o e tha hae

System 3:
 hae tho - - ie ha o o e tha ha ahee tha hae ah ha ah

System 4:
 ah e tha ha ahee tha.... ah e ah ha ae ha o e tha hae tho.

Lift thine eyes, my maiden,
 To the hill-top nigh;
 Lo! the dawn is breaking,
 Rosy beams the sky:
 Lift thine eyes, my maiden,
 Hear thy lover's cry!

Lonely is our valley
 Though the month is May;
 Come and be my moonlight,
 I will be thy day.
 Lift thine eyes, my maiden,
 O, behold me nigh;
 Now the sun is rising,
 Now the shadows fly:
 Lift thine eyes, my maiden,
 Hear thy lover's cry!

The rituals of sacred tribal ceremonies could be sung only by those having them in hereditary charge, but the religious songs of the Wawan were free to all, and were very generally sung.

Every Omaha child is taught by its parents the one tribal prayer, "God, I am poor; have pity upon me!" I have heard this cry in some lonely spot where, hidden from sight, the suppliant poured forth in song his petition for help.

There is also only one funeral-song; it is sung at the obsequies of any man or woman who has been greatly respected in the tribe. Upon the death of such a one, men in the prime of early manhood meet together near the lodge of the deceased, divest themselves of all cloth-

ing but the breech-cloth, make two incisions in the left arm, and under the loop of flesh so made thrust a willow branch, having on it sprays of leaves. With the blood dripping upon the green branches hanging from their arms and shoulder-blades, the men move silently in single file to the lodge where the dead lies; there, ranging themselves in a line, shoulder to shoulder, and marking the rhythm of the tune by beating together two small willow rods, they sing in unison the funeral-song. There is a violent contrast between the bleeding singers and their vocal utterances, for the music in its major strains suggests sunshine, birds, and verdure, and has a fleet happy movement. Nevertheless, there must be some latent harmony between the song and the ceremony. Music, the Indian believes, has power to reach the unseen world. The spirit of the dead man can hear the song as it leaves the body, and the glad cadences are to cheer him as he goes from those who have been dear to him on earth. He hears only, he cannot see — so the song is for him; the bleeding wounds of the singers are expressions of the loss felt by the friends of the dead; his kindred can take note of the manifested sympathy — the wounds are for them. It is a custom among the Omahas to cease wailing at a certain point in the funeral ceremonies, for the reason, they say, that the departing one must not be distressed as he leaves his home behind him. It is also customary after a death to lacerate the limbs, as the shedding of blood expresses how vital is the loss. The funeral-song and ceremony, savage as they appear at first sight, are really full of tender unselfishness, and indicate a strong belief in the continuation of life and its affections.

The songs of the Indian are the spontaneous outburst of his emotions, springing up like the wild flowers of his forests and plains. They have been subjected to no conventionalizing influence of artificial methods, yet, like the native blossoms, they are developed not in violation of, but in strict accordance with, those laws which control the structure of all musical expression. The study of Indian music adds to the accumulating proof of the common mental endowment of all mankind.

The songs of the Indian are an interpretation of his character. From them we discern his religious nature, his attitude toward the unseen powers that control him; they are also a revelation of his social and tribal relations. In no song is there mention of the "father" or the "wife"; the "grandfather" is not spoken

of as personal kindred, but as one whom age has made wise and fit to be trusted. The "mother" is only indirectly referred to, but the "sister" is the representation of the family, and personates the women of the tribe in many songs. All this finds explanation in the peculiar structure of the tribe, and in the non-development of the family idea as we understand it. The only recognized relationship is the clan, or gens, a political subdivision of the tribe. With few exceptions among Indians the woman "carries the clan," and kinship is traced only through her; the children are counted in her clan, and not in that of the father, and, as a man can never marry in his own clan, he must be as a stranger to his wife and to his own children: they can inherit nothing from him or from his clan; when he dies his brothers and sisters, who constitute his family, are his heirs. So when an Indian sings of his home, his sister, with whom he has a recognized relationship, represents that home, rather than the wife and children who can never belong to him. The Indian's love-song is still in unmeaning syllables; its music, expressive of the feeling so often strong and enduring between husband and wife, cannot crystallize into definite words until the political organization of the people has ceased to interfere with the development of the family.

The "friend" appears often in Indian songs. Friendship was not bound by the man's birth-tie, but was free and lasting. The various social and religious societies were composed of members from any clan, and they slipped the leash of tribal structure in their fellowship.

There were no songs of labor, sung by a company of workers, such as the old English catch or guild song. The Indian sang as he chipped his arrow-head, or dug his medicinal roots, but the music was a form of personal appeal to the unseen powers. Labor had not become secularized, and there was no coördination of work; he planted with religious ceremony, and hunted and trapped by means of the mystery-song. The ground to him was still mother earth; the stones, the animals, the trees, all shared with him the common gift of life.

It is idle to speculate in what direction Indian music might have developed; tribes as tribes are rapidly ceasing to exist, and their ancient culture is passing away with the older people. The young Indian men and women are being educated in English speech, imbued with English thought, and the expression of their emotions will hereafter be molded on the lines of our artistic forms.

Alice C. Fletcher.

[Additional examples of the songs of the Omahas will be given in a subsequent number, accompanied by a consideration of their value from a musician's point of view by Prof. John C. Fillmore, of Milwaukee, to whom we are indebted for the arrangements of the Dance- and Funeral-Songs in this article.—THE EDITOR.]