

for it is a singular custom among them that the nephew is a sort of slave to the uncle and owes him far stricter obedience than he does his own father. The uncle who calls on his nephew to perform a certain act or do a certain errand expects the young man to do it at whatever risk of limb or wind. But the nephew has some privileges in return. He has but to make a present to his uncle and lay his hand on whatever belongs to the latter that he may be wanting,—a fine horse, or a new gun, for instance,—and say, “You’ve had this long enough; now I’ll take care of it,” and the thing he claims is his, without further ado. But to return to the feast. All the way from fifty to one hundred often gather at these meetings. Usually commencing at twilight, they continue all night; eating, dancing, singing and story-telling being the order of exercises. Probably the most popular of their dances is the buffalo dance. They represent themselves to be bisons, imitating the legitimate motions and noises of that animal, and introducing a great many others that would quite astonish the oldest buffalo in existence. Of course it has been a long time since any Winnebagoes ever saw buffaloes; their antics are purely traditionary, handed down from former generations of dancers. Once in a while, on such occasions, there will be some fire-water introduced by one or two reckless young scamps, but ordinarily these feasts are not drunken orgies.

After the hunting season, the Indians usually go directly home, selling their furs to the nearest trader, after they get there; unless there should chance to be a trader near the hunting grounds, when they dispose of their goods to him in order to lighten their load.

As among nearly, if not quite, all the tribes of American aborigines, a secret society exists among the Winnebagoes.<sup>1</sup> The only name I ever heard it called is “Medicine.” So far as I have been able to learn, the chief theoretical object of the fraternity is, to keep the virtues of medicinal herbs and the details of medical practice generally, as secrets

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<sup>1</sup> Schoolcraft’s *History of the Indian Tribes of the United States* (1851–57), iii., p. 286.—ED.