

TRADITIONS OF THE NAVAJOS

From Material Furnished to the Desert News by C. L. Christensen, Indian Interpreter and Friend of the Red Man.



C. L. CHRISTENSEN And An Indian Chief.

Editor Desert News—For the benefit of Book of Mormon students, while I am in this city for a few days, I desire to write a few of the most substantial traditions from the history of the Navajo Indians. All, or nearly all, historians have avoided writing anything that would have any tendency to establish the authenticity of the book of their forefathers. I hold that there is no better tribe now living on this North American continent than the Navajos, both physically and intellectually. Their mode of transmitting tradition is this: They formerly had a quorum of thirty-six men, divided into three quorums of twelve each. The first were instructors in history. Language, according to their own traditions, is a new thing made its appearance amongst them, such as railroads, or strange people, they had the exclusive right to name the new thing. The second quorum were botanists, or medicine men. These were experts in the line of medicines. Any one may discover from the advertisements of patent medicines, for people think a medicine is only of Indian origin if it is beyond doubt, the best. The third quorum are astronomers, or star-gazers, as experts in their line. They know the time of the equinoxes as correctly as we do; but they celebrate the solstices of the sun or the moon in terrible ways. The celebration is attended with religious ceremonies, akin to sacrifice and self-punishment. When this is over, prayer, feasts and rejoicing follow. Some of these Indians live to a great old age. I know one man one hundred and twenty-six years old.

SON TAKES FATHER'S PLACE.

The son takes his father's place if qualified; but is first prepared by three years' course of study, in which he must learn the whole of these three distinct callings. He then delivers a lecture containing all the leading features of all this wonderful college of wisdom. He adds to that that he is bullet-proof, fire-proof, and water-proof, and that an unseen spirit has power over him. To these men the writer presented the Book of Mormon. They received it with some reluctance at first, saying that the "Mormons" were poor and had nothing to give them, as our white brethren (meaning other than themselves) had nothing to give them. But they then said: Let by gone times go, we will be friends with you all. We are living in a day of many religions and modes of worship, but ours, they said, is the best. They had their religion before any others came here, hence they did not like to make any sudden changes. It is their custom, when presenting any thing of importance not to sleep neither day nor night until the forenoon has ended, usually in their favor. Their philosophers never tire or weaken. Food is brought once in two or three hours of which all but the spokesman partake. He has the floor and must continue till he thinks he has won the debate. One speaks at a time and great order prevails, except that all give loud shouts of applause by saying Ugh! meaning "that is so."

After undergoing these trying ordeals the speaker is supposed to be friendly and trusty, wise counselor, possessing information establishing the truth of their religion and tradition. They listen, they admire, they approve; then the council breaks up, the chief brings the fore-fingers of both hands out in front of him, indicating that the contestants are even, that their ideas are both correct. The humble interpreter then ventures to push one finger ahead of the other, suggesting that his argument is the best and safest.

They then say it is because you understand the mysterious art of paper and we do not. The interpreter then said it is because I have been sent to tell you something you do not understand pertaining to your future welfare. Here he pauses to tell them of the laws of our country, its greatness, etc. The latter-day Saints' Elders have always advised them to submit to the agents and the representatives of the government, though some of the latter have been most contemptible and corrupt men. The Indians have borne many things most commendably. Such as the destruction of sacred family fires, etc.

THEIR BELIEF IN GOD.

They believe that God is a man, in every sense of this term; as to whether he is large or small they differ a little. The circle of the rainbow indicates to them His distance from us wherever we are on the earth. They say that in the beginning they frequently visited Him; that He made the earth and the planetary systems. He divided the light from the darkness; the heavens were so near the earth that man bumped his head against the firmament. Hence, the rainbow as explained above. He made all kinds of animals, and all things very beautiful. One animal they repute as not being His. This is the mule—an invention, they say, of some man, probably the Mexicans, who were the first foreign foes they ever saw. They and the white invaders who came later, both had the kicking mule.

They believe that God first created a woman and placed her upon the earth. She lived alone a long time, without a companion except the animals, who had a way of communication with her. All was peace, none were vicious nor did the animals prey upon each other. At last God saw it was not good for her to be alone, and He sent a man down to earth. The man, however, did not meet till some time after the man's advent.

WHEN MAN AND WOMAN MET.

One day as she was coming from the south country, where a fruit grew spontaneously and where it was not hard to live, the man came from the north, where he had had hard times to live. When they thus met, he said

that he had seen all kinds of beautiful animals in his travels, but nothing else so beautiful as she. He asked, "What are you?" "I am a woman," she said. "I have seen many kinds of animals, but none could be so subtle or get to help her bear her burdens. Perhaps he would do so. They then heard a voice saying they were to be helpers for each other; and she was to rule over him because she was to bear the sons of men. They lived in peace a long time and had many sons and daughters. At last God gave them a specially large and wise son, with much power and authority, but he died his brother and became the father of war and murder. This was the beginning of sorrow. They then received another son and after a time became very numerous, and very wicked also. The wolf, who represented the Devil, taught them all manner of secret wickedness, such as lying, stealing, and other contemptible vices.

THE SERPENT IDEA.

The serpent also became very familiar with them, especially with the women, and of charming her, so as to make of her prospective offspring a wise person or a lunatic, according as he yielded to his influence. God now became angry with His offspring and sent a rain upon the earth to destroy them. He showed them, however, four exceedingly high mountains, on which all were permitted to go who desired to do so, and amidst every kind of rain also allowed upon the mountains. It was about this time that the first man did something by which he discovered he was naked; so he procured a squirrel skin to cover his nakedness. All Indians since then have worn a similar covering, which is as sacred to them as any garment worn in any ceremony in any church or lodge in our day whatsoever.

About this time a few men had gone up the mountains for safety and with them animals of every kind. The turkey gobbler was the last to go, he being very proud and strutting about. God sent a wave upon him and he fell to the bottom of the sea. He then became a sign of the flood by having a white ring put around his tail, showing where the foam remained. To this day he is to them a sign of the flood. He is regarded by them as an unclean bird, and they keep him only to remind them of his disobedience. Thus will God do, they say, with all the proud and stubborn. After the flood came the fishes in the sea and monsters of the deep. It was the privilege of the antediluvians to become such animals. The Navajos will not eat or touch a fish. If an individual should take a live fish and run after the bravest Navajo chief he would either run, or kill the adventurer on the spot.

AFRAID OF FISH.

Compared to a fish a gun would have no terror to a Navajo. These Indians were so named by the Mexicans. They call themselves Tin-ah-sh, which means men, or, more strictly, a nation of men. With this proud name they neither scalp, torture, nor punish an enemy, who may fall wounded in their midst, but they will do all they can to restore him to health. They claim to be the descendants of an old grey-headed patriarch, or father of us all. In their traditions he had four sons. The eldest was large in stature and was wise, but not very obedient. He attached a value to the rainbow—a very wicked act as the rainbow was sacred, showing the boundary line between them and the heaven. He shot an arrow into the air, saying what goes up must come down on the head or on the ground; and by this impety he cut off communication with the heavens. The arrow has never yet come down, hence they remain in a humble, prayerful attitude and in great humility.

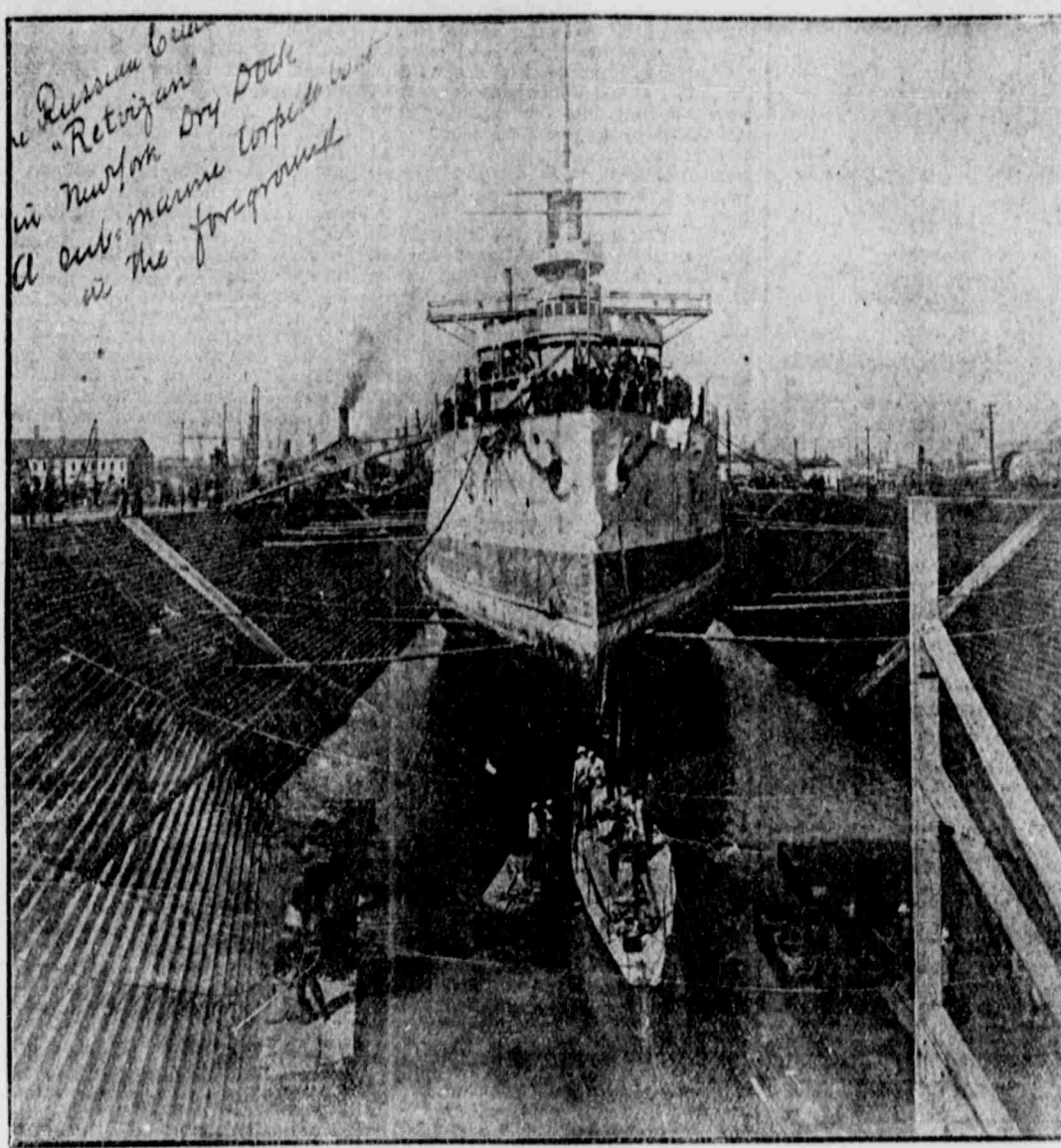
APACHE FATHER.

One of these four sons is their father; the other is the father of the Apache Indians; hence they claim that they are cousins. They were divided, became enemies. Their battles for supremacy were terrible. One faction had no fire, but obtained it from the old man by a stratagem and the old man gave them, along with much good advice, the articles, flint and steel, and also introduced the pipe of peace so universally used in all tribal councils. This pipe has been the indication of willingness and oneness.

After wars of terrible character they became nearly extinct and at this time there came a new hope—a boy, a baby had been found hidden near the Pacific ocean by a virgin most beautiful who never had seen a man. Whether God dropped him down from the clouds, or whether the heaven and earth came together they do not know, but he was holy, all kinds of evil persons came to attempt to destroy him. Giants were numerous in the land and the maiden sometimes hid him under the hearthstone. At other times she would wrap him in a blanket and throw him upon the mantle piece. When he grew to manhood the woman for her great effort in rearing him was given a city with 12 pearly gates and was changed so that she should never die. This city was taken from the earth and drifted forth into the Pacific ocean. She became the medium of changing this body after death, to a new one and assailing the spirit through a 12 mile difficult canyon dark and gloomy, in which it might otherwise remain for 1,000 years. Because of this they kill when one dies, some horses, dogs, goats, sheep, and bury with him his weapons of war. Years ago they buried a wife and other servants with the chiefs. The maiden's son became very useful and did much good. He healed the sick and showed them how to do so. He called himself the Creator and said that he helped to make this earth, a statement that brought affliction upon him.

ALL TRIBES REBELLED.

All the tribes rebelled and by dishonest methods they won the earth from him. They also forced him to give this land to them for an inheritance. He was very angry and threatened them. He confounded their language and made many tribes of them as we find them at this day. He then got on a streak of lightning and waved his hand to the southeast. He has never been seen by them since. However, he left 12 men in his stead, who, when united, had the same power as he had. These also did much good in setting the order of the tribes and in helping them to learn to talk again. Finally there came a day of total darkness. The earth shook, fire came down from heaven, many cities were destroyed by it, while other cities were buried in the depths of the earth. The whole face of the earth was changed by the commotion. The 12 had fled and the Navajos, Apaches and Hopewes were buried for a long time beneath shallow covering. They were kept from utter destruction because they were better than the rest of mankind. Rivers ran the opposite directions from their present courses. They claim that there was a pine forest extending from the La Plata mountains of Colorado to the San Francisco mountains of Arizona. This region is now called the petrified forest of Arizona and is an evidence of the truth of some of their traditions. Hundreds of tons of this petrified wood have been shovelled away to different parts of the earth as a great curiosity for museums.



WAS BUILT IN THE UNITED STATES, Russian Battleship "Retvizan" Which Was Erroneously Reported Sunk by the Japanese Navy.

Special Correspondence. Washington, Feb. 22.—Two of the first vessels of the czar's navy to succumb to the superiority of Japanese arms were floated in the Cramp Shipyards at Philadelphia. They were the Retvizan and Variaz. The former is said to have been built and to be capable of further service. The latter, at last reports, was a total wreck. Whether or not the Japs have discovered for themselves the secret of sub-marine torpedo warfare is an open question. Shortly after the destruction of the first Russian vessels off Port Arthur by the Japanese torpedo flotilla one of the officials of the Cramp Shipbuilding company declared that no surface torpedo boat could have caused the havoc reported. He added that he knew of his own personal knowledge that there are several sub-marine boats attached to the Japanese navy and it was one or more of these, he was certain, that won the first victory for Japan on the morning of February 9. Soon after the Retvizan was launched she was docked in the navy yard at Brooklyn. A photograph was made of her after the water had been pumped out of the dry dock. It happened that a sub-marine torpedo boat was in the dock at the same time and was caught by the photographer. This picture which shows the relative size of a ten million dollar battleship and a \$200,000 torpedo boat is an eloquent commentary upon the "value of little things," especially if they are naval vessels with crews competent to handle them. The photograph appears above.

Here is an example of the unreliability of the war news from the far east at this time. Some days ago the report was definitely and widely telegraphed over the world that the Retvizan had been sent to the bottom of the ocean by the mikado's fleet. On Thursday of this week the cable brought messages that she had covered herself with glory in repulsing the Japanese ships the day before when the latter attempted to storm Port Arthur; that she beat back the enemy in masterful fashion, a fact that sent a thrill of patriotic pride through the empire of the czar. If Japan's victories have all been like this one she has gained no considerable advantage thus far. It would seem that she must have a very industrious press bureau at work in her behalf; one that does not hesitate to color when color is required.

DO NATIONS FIGHT AT BEGINNING OF EACH 100 YEARS?

THE superstitious notion is extant that there must be a great war because the opening years of every century have always been thus marked. Of course, if the latter were true it would form no sufficient reason for a war at this time, says the New York Tribune. A century is not a natural division of time, as is a day, a season of a year, but is entirely artificial, and there is no more reason why war should occur at the beginning than at the middle or the end of it. However, as a matter of fact, the statement is not true, as every one at all acquainted with history should know. The nineteenth century began with peace and the world had known for many years, and if a couple of years later war broke out it was only the renewal of the wars that had marked the closing years of the preceding century. The eighteenth century began with wars, but they were merely the continuation of conflicts begun in the seventeenth. The early years of the seventeenth were marked with more peace-making than war-making. The wars at the opening of the sixteenth century were prolongations of those in the fifteenth, and were, at most, petty affairs. Those at the opening of the fifteenth were left over from the fourteenth. There were no important wars in the first years of the fourteenth century, save those at Constantinople and between England and Scotland, both legacies from the thirteenth. No great war occurred in the first decade of the thirteenth century or of the twelfth. At the opening of the eleventh Mahmud of Ghazni invaded India. The tenth was marked with no new war, nor was the ninth. The eighth was ten years old when the Saracens invaded Spain. The beginning of the seventh was peaceful. The first years of the sixth and fifth saw Rome involved in war, but war was then the habitual state of Rome. The fourth and third began in comparative peace. The second saw no new war, but rather the ending of the old struggle in Dacia, and the fierce conflicts of the early years of the first century of our era were merely the continuation of those begun a dozen years before. In all these last nineteen centuries, indeed, not more than two are to be charged with having opened with new and important wars. Of the centuries before our era, the first began in peace; the second with nothing but the second Macedonian war; the third with the third Samnite war; the fourth with no great struggle; the fifth with the burning of Sardinia and the battle of Lake Regillus, continuations of wars begun long before; the sixth with Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Jerusalem, and in the earlier centuries, so far as chronology informs us, there were no initial wars of magnitude. The current superstition, then, is in a noteworthy degree contrary to the facts. Instead of being invariably or even generally marked with the outbreaks of great wars, the beginnings of centuries have in the vast majority of cases been remarkably free from such catastrophes. If we were to form any rule from historical precedent, it would be, therefore, that this year and the next few years should be peaceful. But we shall make no such prophecy, nor shall we expect this exhibition of the facts entirely to demolish the foolishly false superstition which now so widely prevails.

DEFENSE OF THE RUSSIANS AT BELEAGUERED PORT ARTHUR.



The plan of the Russians to desert Port Arthur and make Vladivostok the naval base, leaves this fort, commanding the sea and the Manchurian railroad at Talienwan one of the most important points in the coming struggle for the possession of what is supposed to be Russia's eastern Gibraltar.

POSSIBLE ALLIANCE BETWEEN UNITED STATES AND ENGLAND

"There is not a nation today that is cultivating the friendship of the American people as is England. In Washington astute and far-seeing men see in the not distant future the United States and Great Britain standing shoulder to shoulder to stop the Cossack hordes from overrunning Asia, and to stop the auspices of the Students' Christian one-fifth of the habitable portion of our globe from passing under the oligarchy of the ruling class of the earth. Mr. Wellman's subject was 'Behind the Scenes at Washington.' He spoke at the First Methodist church before a crowded house and appeared under the auspices of the Students' Christian associations of Northwestern University. Record-Herald, and a close observer of affairs at the nation's capital, expressed to an Evanston audience his belief in the coalition at no distant day of the two great Anglo-Saxon nations to stay the hand of the Muscovite in the orient. That the speaker's prophecy struck a popular chord in the audience was evident from the prolonged applause that greeted the declaration. Mr. Wellman's subject was 'Behind the Scenes at Washington.' He spoke at the First Methodist church before a crowded house and appeared under the auspices of the Students' Christian associations of Northwestern University. With these words Walter Wellman, the Washington correspondent of the

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chastise, or even annex the whole of Central or South America, the nations of the world would not fire a gun." Mr. Wellman told many anecdotes of Presidents Roosevelt and McKinley, and described at some length the characteristics of each. "President Roosevelt is the most interesting character seen in Washington in 25 years," he said. "His is the most positive nature since the days of Andrew Jackson. I know Mr. Roosevelt, but circumstances over which I had no control, prevented me from knowing Mr. Jackson, but in a comparison I'll back Mr. Roosevelt to win the blue ribbon." "Whatever he does he does with all his might. He has 35 men to carry on his correspondence, and he is obliged from its nature to give his personal attention to perhaps half of it. He has on an average 50 callers each day. He has speeches and messages to prepare and messages to give. The social duties required of him are enough for one man to endure. Besides he receives socially and talks with his friends, has time to read the current books, magazines and reviews, and every morning reads the Chicago Record-Herald. He also has given to him a big pile of newspaper clippings which he looks over, for every one contains some reference to himself. "The presidency is the hardest job in this country, and an election to the office shortens the life of the incumbent 10 years, it is estimated. There are the nervous and physical strains of the office, besides the peculiar, unmentionable and damnable dangers which surround the chief executive. In the last 20 years eight men have held the office, but there is only one ex-president alive today." Mr. Wellman told a story which he said had never been published, of how Senator Hanna had declared to him, after the death of President McKinley, that the president's constitution was not able to recover from the wound because of what he had undergone in his devotion to his invalid wife. "It is a mistake to suppose that McKinley was a weak man because he was gentle," he said. "He almost always had his own way, but he had it in such a way that other men always thought they were having their own. It has been said that he was dominated by the strong will of Mark Hanna, but Mr. Hanna so loved McKinley that he never made the slightest effort to dominate him. But McKinley by love did twist Mark Hanna around his little finger." Mr. Wellman declared Washington to be the most moral, sober and orderly of all the world's great capitals—"Paris in beauty, but not Paris in morals."

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