



The "Flu" among the Navajos

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3. Young chickens fed on two-year-old corn kept well, but when that feed was used up and they were then fed on the last year's corn, they immediately took sick and began dying.

4. Young chickens fed on the last year's corn mostly all died.

It was then learned that the corn crop of 1917 never rightly matured; in fact, in shelling it off of the cob there was seldom an ear whose grains were not moldy at least at the point end. This was the secret of the disease conveyed to the chickens—the toxic principle of the mold had caused the chicken plague, the same as the toxic principle of the mold on the grass in Nebraska killed the horses there some years ago, and the same principle of the mold on the wild rice at Nett Lake, Minn., caused the scourge of cholera infantum at that place in the fall of 1913.

The "Flu" Among the Navajos.

ALBERT B. REAGAN.

The writer arrived at the western Navajo agency, Tuba City, Ariz., October 3, 1918, to take charge of the Marsh Pass boarding school, which he found to be still eighty miles farther on to the northeast. He had come direct from Washington, D. C., via Flagstaff, to take the position; and while on the trip he found the papers filled with accounts of the ravages of the Spanish "flu"—cantonments were suffering; Boston, Mass., was prostrate, and so on. Arriving at Flagstaff, he found the state normal closed on account of an outbreak of the disease. One of the professors of that institution had died of the disease. On arriving at Tuba City, two members of the agency force were not feeling very well, but no one realized that they were suffering from the "flu." On October 12 we proceeded on through Marsh pass—and "a pass" is right—and on to the Indian school of the same name, twelve miles farther to the northeast, at the little settlement and post office called Kayenta, accompanied by several agency employees, one of whom got very sick en route. On the 14th the agency party returned, the sick official being in such bad shape and with such high fever that it was with difficulty that he was returned to the agency at all. After the departure we began to make preparations for opening the school on October 21.

Up to this time no one knew that the people who were feeling badly had the "flu," and though we had read much about the ravages of the disease, none of us realized its deadliness. But the day we left the agency Dr. N. O. Reynolds, the agency physician, began to suspect that the Indian children at the boarding school at that city were taking the disease, and before the sun had gone to rest on that night he had a dozen youngsters in the hospital. In three days practically every pupil at the Indian school was down.

On October 18, at 11 a. m., an auto from Flagstaff, 180 miles away, arrived at the school with an order from Doctor Reynolds, instructing me to close my school and proceed at once with the whole school force to Tuba City, to take care of the school at that place, as practically every one was prostrate there. As per order, we had a hurried dinner, threw a few things into a suit case, and at 1 p. m. started for Tuba. It was a bad day. We passed through showers of rain, sleet, hail and snow and chilling winds in descending from the pass. Without mishap we arrived at Tuba City at 7 p. m. and found the

conditions as bad as represented. They were so bad that the automobile driver at Flagstaff had been phoned to get us, as no one could be spared at Tuba to come to Marsh pass. Indian Agent Walter Runke was not expected to live; Mrs. Butler, the Missionary's wife, was dying; nearly all the other employees were sick, and 59 Indian boys and 79 Indian girls at the school were down. As soon as we could get a lunch we took immediate charge, my wife taking charge of the girls' dormitory and myself the boys'. I relieved a man whose whole family was down with the disease, and my wife relieved a sick matron who was taking care of sick children while suffering with a high fever. Twenty-three of my boys were frothing at the mouth, and some were delirious, one little fellow getting completely out of doors twice that first night. Added to my troubles was the fact that as every one was down with the disease, sanitary conditions had gotten very bad, as many of the children were wholly helpless, and added to this was the children's occupying different rooms on different floors, and the cooking establishment, where all the nourishment had to be obtained, was quite a distance away in another building. Not only that, but on account of the shortage of help I had to help carry the food to the sick in the girls' dormitory, as well as look after the sick in my own. I blistered my feet by step climbing. Neither myself nor my wife got the disease, and, luckily, too, Doctor Reynolds kept his health and was able to work almost day and night, which he cheerfully and faithfully did. It might be well to add here that every employee of the government at the school and agency did all that was in their power, working even when sick to save the children. After something like a week other employees began to convalesce, so they were able to relieve us some; and then help came from Flagstaff, which relieved us of the night work and some of the food carrying. In the meantime two of the girls died, both at night, and on account of the Navajos' fear of death and the dead, we had to carry them out of the dormitory as soon as dead, with lights darkened so the other pupils could not see what we were doing; otherwise we likely would have had a worse stampede than when a wolf gets into a chicken house. We also made the coffins and buried the pupils in the early hours of the morning, for the same reasons. The Indian children never knew that there had been a death among them till after they had convalesced. No Indian boy died at the school at the time, but one John Navajo has since died from complications due to the "flu." Three white people also died in Tuba and vicinity.

The Hopi village of Moencopi, two miles southeast of Tuba, has approximately 300 inhabitants. Of these, 181 were sick at one time. Miss Elizabeth Ruth, one of my employees, an educated Moqui, was detailed to help take care of her people at Moencopi, aiding Mr. Curn, the day school teacher, and Mrs. Ruhl, the field matron. But unfortunately the field matron was already sick in bed when Miss Ruth got there, and three days later she also took down with the disease. Consequently Mr. Curn was overwhelmed with the task. At this critical time some well-meaning but misguided nurses came out from Flagstaff, and, not understanding the Indian character, got the village mad, so that the Indians refused to receive any attention from them or take any medicine administered by them, the medicine men and other dignitaries following them around as they went about the village, forbidding the people to take their medicine. They apparently did not try to relieve the sick people in any other way.

The Flagstaff people giving up the task as hopeless and the help at the school being now able to control the situation there, I went to Mr. Runke and Doctor Reynolds and got permission to take over the work at Moencopi, where I was heroically aided by Mr. Curn in every way possible. When I arrived at the village I found there were whole families who had not had a bit of cooked food for six days, and even eight days; one family of six had eaten only a half a melon in five days. Coming back to the agency, Doctor Reynolds and myself took the government auto and went into the hills to search for some sheep to kill, as the school was out of meat at the moment. We found some sheep, but as the shepherd was not the owner we could not purchase one, so we had to motor some five miles further to find the owner, a Hopi Indian. Getting the sheep, I prepared twenty gallons of soup in the school kitchen and proceeded to the village by auto with it. On taking the soup to one of the houses where a lone widow and two children lived, the woman burst into tears and said, "Is that for us? How thankful I am, as my children have had nothing to eat for three days, and I was so sick I could not hold up my head." The next morning one of these little children frequently asked his mother when the good "American" was coming, and when I arrived he had his face pressed against the pane, watching expectantly. Given food and reassured, but few refused to take medicine, and in a short time most all in the village had convalesced. Of the 300 who were sick only 16 died.

But dealing with the Navajo is quite different. He has never been under very severe discipline of the government. He is a nomad in the full sense of that word. He is like the Irishman's flea; he is here to-day, but to-morrow where will he be? Like the Arab, he moves about with his flock of sheep, goats, horses and a few cattle. He may be in a certain canyon to-day and miles from there in another canyon to-morrow, as the scarcity of water and grass necessitates. He has but little or no furniture, and but few traps of any sort. In some places he may cultivate a little corn and raise a few melons, which is about the extent of his farming. He has no permanent abode, and his shelter extends from a brush corral to a dirt-covered, cone-shaped hogan, which is always destroyed when any of its inmates die. Also, like the Arab, he is very independent by nature and wishes to be left alone. Moreover, his own medicine man ministers to his needs of medical attention and prepares him for the land of Indian bliss in the hereafter.

As soon as the people of Moencopi began to convalesce Doctor Reynolds, Mr. Stewart and myself took the auto and went to find the Navajos. Reaching the settlement known as the "Fields" in Moencopi wash, we found it abandoned. We then followed the Navajos as far as Mohave, where the missionary told us they had all fled toward Navajo mountain and Black mesa with their flocks at the breaking out of the disease in their camp. The next day Dr. Grady Shytles, a special government physician, arrived, and plans were at once perfected to visit every settlement on the reservation and establish nurse-medical service at each place, principally at Blue Canyon, Red Lake, Kaibito and Shanto. Also hearing that the disease had reached Marsh pass, my wife and myself returned, November 4, to that place, accompanied by both doctors. Arriving there we immediately turned the school into a hospital, which was soon filled with the sick, for people were sick and dying everywhere. Soon then nurses and other help was brought to us from the agency at Tuba, as dire necessity demanded.

When the disease struck the Navajos they fled from the places where it appeared, often abandoning everything in their panic, even their sheep in one instance. One Indian man is also alleged to have abandoned his sick family, a wife and several children, to die of starvation, and several families are said to have abandoned their sick members. The fatality of the disease was astounding. Whole families were wiped out, leaving their sheep wandering about over the hills to run wild at the mercy of the coyotes. Several related families living together all died but one twelve-year-old boy, who was found herding the combined flocks of sheep, and now it is said the agent at Shiprock, under whose jurisdiction he belonged, is making efforts to have the boy inherit the combined flocks of sheep he saved from the wolves. At another place a family of eight were picking piñon nuts when the disease overtook them. When found later they were all lying dead around their wagon. A Piute woman died, and the father and five children crossed the San Juan into the Navajo country with their sheep, when they were overtaken by the disease and died one by one along the trail, only one small boy surviving—so small that he could not tell what his parent's name was. A Navajo by the name of Bill found him wandering about aimlessly and took him to his hogan near here. The sheep were probably all lost. The wife of an Indian by the name of Ralph gave birth to a baby girl while sick with the "flu." Five days later it became evident that she would die from the effects of this disease and from blood poisoning. As soon as it was seen that she would die, she and baby were at once abandoned. Later the baby was found by the agency party, and it and its mother, who was still alive, were brought to the hospital at the school, but the mother died that same evening, and the little one had been so starved that it succumbed two days later, though it was not sick with the "flu." There are also other instances where the wife died and the husband abandoned his children to perish by the dead mother. In one case reported to the writer a husband abandoned his dead wife and several children, all of whom starved to death. Among Navajos, if the mother dies the children are virtually orphans, though the father survives, as they are not considered his children but the children of the clan to which the mother belonged. Moreover, he inherits none of his wife's or his children's property in case of their death, the same diverting to the clan of the wife.

During the "flu" epidemic many dead were abandoned and left unburied. Others were left where they died, in the hogan, and were simply covered with a few shovelfuls of dirt right where they died. The writer found such a burial in several hogans, and one in the only really well-constructed house of a Navajo he has seen on the reservation—a well-put-up stone structure. In their panic, after throwing some dirt over the corpse near the fireplace, where she had died, they fled and left the door open. Seeing me, they begged me to go and shut the door for them, which I did. Many dead were left unburied where not close to government employees, or trading posts. The Indians were so terribly afraid of the dead, or so weakened by the disease themselves, that they fled from the "death hogan," begging the whites to bury their dead. If there were no whites in the vicinity they were left unburied. The writer helped bury three Indians that were found abandoned unburied. The Kayenta policeman was buried by a government party after he had been dead in an abandoned hogan eight days. Such were the terrible ravages of the disease.

It might be well to add here that the Navajo country contains 25,725 square miles, an area larger than Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and New Hampshire combined; and for the purpose of administration is divided into the following reservations: Pueblo Bonito, San Juan, Navajo, Navajo Extension, Western Navajo, and Hopi. The population is estimated at 30,000. It might further be added that this write-up extends to other reservations than the one to which the writer belongs as an employee.

On November 5, in company with Mr. Clyde Caldwell and John Straus, the agency stockman, we skirted the east side of Black mesa for sick people. We buried three people, two of whom were abandoned dead that we found. Burying the Indians and looking after the wants of the sick brought night upon us on a road trail we had never seen before, and that with an auto. About 7 p. m. we got a sick Indian and started to the school hospital with him. After traveling about half an hour the lights on the auto burned out and we were left in absolute darkness. We then walked ahead to find the road, but missed it some place in the darkness, finally coming onto a corral. It had been snowing and misting all afternoon, and, with a deathly sick man, we were in a horrible plight, as we could find no road leading from the corral. We got a fire for warmth and as a landmark, so we would not get lost from the auto while looking for the road. We then made torches from cedar bark which we pulled off of the poles of the corral. With these we circled the corral till we found the road, which was about half a mile to the westward. Then by riding on the running board and holding the torches in front of the auto we finally reached the school with the patient.

The next morning one of our patients died. Up to this time I had had the patients only in the boys' dormitory. Upon hearing the death wail I rushed into this dormitory. Pandemonium had already taken possession of the sick there before I arrived. With wild eyes they were starting to leave the "place of the dead"; even a sick man who could scarcely hold his head up the evening before was out of bed, trembling from head to foot. Aided by Mr. Caldwell and Mr. George M. Post, I got them from the room into the girls' dormitory. But that afternoon an old medicine man sent them word that they would all die if they stayed there, so one by one they were all taken away by their relatives. In two days, however, I had the dormitories filled again, finally getting all the old patients back.

The man who died we wrapped in a red blanket. We had no lumber to make coffins with, as we were approximately 200 miles from the railroad. With him we started the Kayenta graveyard. As time went on more died and were similarly buried, nine of the hospital patients dying. Remembering our first experience, when one got dangerously sick we separated him from the others, placing him in the boys' dormitory; and when one died we buried him at night, so as not to arouse the superstition of the Indians any more than necessary against the "place of the dead," as they began to call the school plant. In all, four men, two women and three children died at the school hospital.

When sick the Navajos think one should be fed much—at least much meat. If he cannot eat it is expected he will die. Stuffing in sickness is common, and often is the cause of much trouble and not a few deaths. Mr. Greene, who had charge of the medical work at Kaibito during the "flu" epidemic,

told the writer that he knew of cases where the sick one was too weak and sick to eat, in which case the well ones made meat balls about the size of one's thumb and forced them down the patient till he was "full up to his chin." Such stuffed patients usually died. When sick the Indians also often give the patient the juice of the Arizona jimson. This makes the pulse run high and causes delirium, and usually is administered as a last resort. It is reported that it was much used in doctoring the "flu."¹

In doctoring for the "flu" at Kaibito the Indians killed horses and made horse-tail soup as a remedy to cure the sick, which, by the way, was a good thing, as it helped get rid of some of the worthless ponies. The main remedy, however, was the powow Yavapai ceremonies, accompanied by elaborate sand paintings. The paintings, usually made in circular form, are drawn in a hogan, all the household but the patient being moved out, usually to a brush-corral wind protection. The drawing is then made around the central fire, usually in concentric bands, whose separating rings are usually rainbows. The figures of human-mythical beings, called "chindes," are the crude figures of the interband spaces. Each medicine man seems to have his own system of drawings, though, on the whole, they are very similar. The drawing must be made and used the same sun. When completed, the nude patient is daubed all over with a medical concoction of charcoal and other medicinal ingredients of the Navajo. He is then placed either on or near the drawing. At one which the writer visited the patient was placed just to the west of it; in another he was sitting on the central figure. Then elaborate singing and praying follows, the praying sounding much like Catholic people saying the rosary. The medicine man's part, on account of its repetition, resembles the Jewish prayer, "Our Father Abraham, Isaac, Jacob," etc. As a faith cure this is a good remedy, but it will not cure the "flu." This failing, the final and last remedy was a massaging, contorting process. As the disease usually terminated in pneumonia, and consequently the lungs were tight, the medicine man jumped on the afflicted parts to loosen them up. The result can be imagined. The special physician came upon a medicine man doctoring an Indian by the name of Gladhand by this process, with dire results to the Indian medicine man before the doctor got his ire soothed.

Below is a list of the Indians who have died of the "flu" within a radius of twenty-five miles of the Marsh Pass boarding school.

Clazien Begay; male; age, 45; widower.

Eshin Sosies' wife; age, 30. Four children; ages, 9 years, 4 years, 2 years, 6 months. Husband survived.

Waie; male; age, 30.

Asthon Elseesee; female; age, 40. One child; age, 14 years.

Aosteon Ganeten Begay; male; age, 12.

Aosteon Ganeten Begay; male, age, 8.

Nelthinie Begay; male; age, 4.

Nelthinie Begay; male; age, 5 days.

Kay Bitse; female; age, 42. Five children; ages, 18, 16, 14, 12 and 7 years.

Asthon Hunnagonic Begay; male; age, 16.

Glad Hand; male; age, 26.

1. This medicine is also given to persons when going into a trance. It makes them "see things." It is reported that one time here at Kayenta a certain Indian stole some property. The medicine man went into a trance while under the influence of this weed, and coming out of the trance state he prophesied (told) who had the goods, and it was alleged that the property was at once returned. The juice of this plant is used in many medicine ceremonies.

- Tom Holiday's wife; age, 50. Husband survived.
Tom Holiday's daughter-in-law; age, 20. One child; age, 2 years. Husband survived.
Tom Holiday's daughter-in-law; age, 18. One child; age, 10 days. Husband survived.
Hosten Tas; male; age, 38. Three children; ages, 2 years, 1 year, 10 days. Two wives survived.
Doten Betsoil; male; age, 37. Two children; ages, 3 years, 3 months. Wife survived.
Tazhie; male; age, 35. Two children; ages, 3 years, 1 year. Wife survived.
Arskinninee Beg; female; age, 35. Three children; ages, 10, 7 and 5 years. Husband survived.
Belin Thlacien Beg's four children; and grandson, one year old.
Sayetsissy Begay; male; age, 12.
Tolchaconie; male; age, 30.
Tolchaconie Bitsilly; male, age, 16.
Tolchaconie; mother; age, 50.
Tolchaconie; grandmother; age, 70.
Tolchaconie; sister; age, 16. Husband survived.
Nockai Begay; male; age, 25. Two children; ages, 9 and 3 years.
Nockai Begay's wife; age, 25.
Nockai Begay's daughter; age, 7.
Asthon Behsteer's wife; age, 24. Two children; ages, 4 and 3 years. Husband survived.
Asthon Behsteer's daughter; age, 10 days.
Pecho Bitse; female; age, 40. Four children; ages, 14 years, 7 years, 3 years, 6 months. Husband survived.
Kitsie Pie Begay; son; age, 3.
Nedocloie Bedony; male; age, 35.
Nedocloie Bedony's child.
Nedocloie Bedony's child.
Nedocloie Bedony's child.
Nedocloie Bedony's daughter's child.
Otizy Clizhen's daughter; age, 18.
Otizy Clizhen's daughter; age, 15.
Otizy Clizhen's daughter; age, 10.
Aotolie Mez; female; age, 18.
Euchigie's son; age, 4.
Euchigie's daughter; age, 6 months.
Belin Clizhnie Beti's child; male; age, 18.
Belin Clizhnie Beti's child; female; age, 12.
Belin Clizhnie Beti's child; female; age, 10.
Belin Clizhnie Beti's child; age, 6 months.
Belin Clizhnie Beti's brother's wife's daughter; age, 8.
Yadelgood's child; female; age, 6.
Hasten Yazzie's brother's two children.
Ason Stellie's child; male; age, 5.
Leonard Thomas' wife; age, 20.
Leonard Thoma's daughter.
Leonard Thomas' daughter.
Leonard Thomas' son.
Leonard Thomas' wife's sister.
Hosteen Betsisie Betse; female; age, 35. One child; age, 15 days. Husband survived.
Hosteen Betsisie Betse's daughter; age, 18.
Hosteen Betsisie Betse's daughter; age, 12.
Hosteen Betsisie Betse's son; age, 10.
Hosteen Betsisie Betse's (wife); age, 30.
Hosteen Betsisie Betse's daughter; age, 9.
Hosteen Betsisie Betse's son; age, 7.
Hosteen Betsisie Betse's daughter; age, 5.
Adakie Bidony; male; age, 25.
Adakie Bitse; female; age, 15.
Hosteen Doctin Betsoie; female; age, 3.
Hosteen Clee Betatis; female; age, 3.
Ason Clizzie Betsoie; male; age, 6 months.
Asthon Huddledruteg Begay; male; age, 30. Wife survived.
John Nez Hootonie Begay; male; age, 45.

- John Nez Hootonie Begay's child; female; age, 34.
 John Nez Hootonie Begay; male; age, 30. Wife survived.
 John Nez Hootonie Begay's nephew; male; age, 18.
 Dura Clizhen; male; age, 35. Four children; ages, 15, 12, 10 and 5 years. Wife survived.
 Dura Clizhen's brother; male; age, 25. One child. Wife survived.
 Nokai Denas; four children.
 Hosteen So Bitse; female; age, 4.
 Dayteen Bitsoie's boy; age, 18.
 Dayteen Bitsoie's girl; age, 9.
 Dayteen Bitsoie's boy; age, 8.
 Dayteen Bitsoie's child; age, 6 months.
 Eshin Sosie Bitse; female; age, 6 months.
 Dogi Yazzie; male; age, 20.
 Dogi Yazzie's wife.
 Dogi Yazzie's child; age, 18 months.
 Dogi Bitdaizy; female; age, 30.
 Dogi Bitdaizy's husband.
 Dogi Bitdaizy's child; age, 7.
 Dogi Bitdaizy's child; age, 5.
 Dogi Bitdaizy's child; age, 3.
 John Nez Hoolonie Benullie; age, unknown.
 Belin Cizhin Beti Bitse; female; age, 10.
 Hosteen Yazzie Bitsilly's child; age, unknown.
 Similie Bidoney's granddaughter.
 Tom Holliday's son; age, 22.
 Tom Holliday's second wife; age, 55.
 Hosteen Chee Bitsee.
 Jah Nez Holoeice Begay.
 Jah Nez Holoeice Begay; relative.
 Crank's son; male; age, 21.
 Similie Bidonny; male; age, 50.
 Maud; a school girl; age, 16.

Five Piutes were also found dead on the trail between here and the San Juan river. I had them buried by the two Mormon men who discovered them.

Some Suggestions on Climate.

ALBERT B. REAGAN.

In August, 1913, while I was Indian agent at Nett Lake, Minn., I visited my mother at Fredonia, Kan., and found the whole country burning up with drouth and scorching sun. At the same time the newspapers at Duluth, Minn., were printing headlines, "Its Cool at Duluth." Moreover, in northern Minnesota it was raining nearly every day. Last winter (1917-'18) the eastern part of the United States to some distance west of the Mississippi river was snowed under and experienced the worst winter in years, while at the same time the western United States, the Rocky Mountains and the plains had scarcely any winter, the lightest in many years. This winter (1918-'19) the Rocky Mountains and the plains have the severest winter in years and the East hardly any winter at all. Congressman C. B. Miller writes me that Minnesota has a "banana" winter, it is so warm.

It would seem that wherever the cold wave first strikes in the early winter sufficiently to cause a heavy blanket of snow to fall, a cold area is there generated, and as cold, like anything else, tends to perpetuate itself, the accumulation of cold and consequent snow continues in that area till the re-