

THE CATTAIL GAME OF THE ARIKARA CHILDREN

The cattail (*Typha latifolia*) was used by the children of the Arikara tribe and most probably of other tribes as well, in playing a very active, entertaining, and amusing game. Three long leaves of cattail were plaited together in such fashion as to form a cross. To this purpose, one leaf was laid down and then another leaf was attached at right angles by bending the base of the leaf squarely about the middle of the first leaf. The third leaf was attached in like manner, but extending at right angles on the opposite side of the first leaf from the second.

This was a game, which might be played by girls alone, or by girls and boys together. The cross of cattail blades was laid upon the ground, and four children would step up and stand round it, joining hands diagonally the crossed blades. The illustration (fig. 82) will show how the cross was made of the blades, how the children's hands were joined, and how the children danced around the crossed blades.

The four children, holding hands in the manner indicated, must move rapidly about the cross as it lies upon the ground, being careful not to touch the blades. If one should misstep and stumble upon the crossed leaves, all immediately loosed hands. The one who made the misstep ran away and the other three gave chase, each armed with a cattail stalk with seed head on. With these they struck the fleeing one if able to overtake him. As they struck the fugitive over back or shoulders, the cattail clubs shed their fleecy seeds and the air was full of the flying down. After this penalty, the game was resumed. Perhaps next time it was another one who made the unfortunate misstep and became the fugitive. It was all carried on the utmost good feeling and jollity, and the children had a merry time. They were very fond of the cattail game.