

The end of the dance is a rush to the dance rock, where the snakes are hurled into a heap, sometimes a foot high by four feet across. A moment's leaping about the pile, sprinkling the sacred cornmeal; then they each grasp a number of snakes and dart toward the four points of the compass, and reaching the bottom of the *mesa*, or sacred enclosure usually on a hillside, they release them. These rites continue from half an hour to an hour, ending with sunset, when the performers return to their sacred purifications with mystic herbs. The Húpi hold the rattler to be one of their first ancestors, the son of the Moqui Adam and Eve. Hence also the stone fetich carved into the semblance of the reptile.

The Navajo Indians, nearest neighbors to the Moquis, will not touch a snake, and have severely beaten a silversmith for making to order a bracelet which represented a rattler.

They, however, give the bear the first rank among beasts, even above man, for man is in mortal fear of the bear's supernatural powers. The Navajo would not reveal to a hunter a bear's den, lest the beast should visit him and his family with condign vengeance. In one case only would he assault a bear—namely, when that particular bear has killed a Navajo, and even then the avengers halt before the bear's cave, to make a solemn apology, chanting the praises of the king of beasts, and begging pardon for the deed of vengeance to which they feel constrained. Then they kill the bear and go back to fast and purify themselves. To us the whole proceeding would seem ludicrously farcical, but it is fact. Prayers and sacrifices to the bear are common, and even his skin is not to be profanely touched.

Witchcraft is a common faith among the Indians; witches are not only believed in, but are put to death in New Mexico, where are 30,000 Indians all firmly holding to this superstition. The Pueblo of Sandia is nearly extinct by witch executions. Among the 1100 of the Isletans, nearly half of the people are believed to be thus possessed. To keep down witchcraft is the main duty of the "medicine men," and the *kum-pah-whit-hah-wen* are the guards who execute witches by shooting an arrow entirely through the body from left to right.

Witches are universal enemies; they bring all calamities and keep away all blessings. Disease, drought, famine—all disasters are traced to them. Hence all religious ceremonies begin with the dispersion of evil spirits, and numerous charms are used against them. Births must be guarded lest the babe be appropriated by the witches, and the soul of the dead cannot journey to the hunting-grounds of the blest in safety unless they are thrown off the trail.

Suspicion is easily aroused where such dread is in the air. Red eyes are a presumption of wakeful nights; the sickness of an enemy hints a power to work evil upon him. When any one is suspected, the medicine men secretly search his house and belongings, and to find an accursed feather there seals his doom, which is inflicted officially after due trial.