

death is paganism ; the mother carried by her own sons to the house of God is Christianity.

Those are some of the things God has permitted us to see in our work among the red men, and it is a joy to tell you ; we are glad to tell you that even among the red men God has saved some hundreds of precious souls. Devoted men and women there are toiling on. God is blessing them in the work. Indian converts are being raised up, and now some of our most successful workers are Indians.—*Northfield Echoes.*

THE INDIANS OF AMERICA: THEIR CURIOUS CUSTOMS, WEIRD WAYS AND STRANGE SUPERSTITIONS.—II.

BY THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF.

The Indians of the Moqui towns retain with singular tenacity the queer customs that antedate the Spanish conquest. In their cliff-cities, for example, even yet exists the most incredible barbaric dance, the rattlesnake dance, one of their secret rites known to have been celebrated three hundred years ago and more.

The snake is with them an object of idolatrous reverence in proportion to the deadliness of its venom. The Pueblos, in fact, keep one species of serpent, harmless to them, as a mouse-hunter, which pursues the house-pests to the very remotest hiding-place. The rattlesnake, or *chú-ah*, is of course peculiarly sacred, and holds a place among the "Trues ;" though not worshipped, the Pueblos hold the *chú-ah* worthy of homage, and endowed with extraordinary powers. Every Pueblo town used to keep a huge rattlesnake in a sacred room, and fed it once a year with solemn rites. In Isleta a sacred rattler, said to be as large around as a man's body, was kept in the volcanic caves of the Cerro del Aire, and when it got away in 1887 patient and official search was made, in vain, to recapture it. Snake-tending has nearly become an extinct custom in all New Mexican Pueblos, but every other year during the August moon the snake dance still survives.

For sixteen days previous the professional "snake men" prepare for the August festival, seated in their sacred rock-chambers ; fasting from all food, they drink only a bitter "tea" infused from a secret herb which is an antidote to the venom, and rub their bodies with certain herbs. Six days previous to the dance they go on a hunt for rattlers, which they tickle with the "snake-whip" or sacred tuft of eagle plumes, until the snake starts to run ; then it is snatched up and flung into a bag. These hunts must be in the sacred order—on successive days, east, north, west, south—it were impious to transgress this order. The captured reptiles are kept in the *kiloa* or *estufa*, the sacred room, until the night before the dance, when they are ceremonially and solemnly cleansed at an altar which the "snake captain" makes of colored sands drawn in a mystic pattern.