

THE EVENING NEWS.

Saturday, March 12, 1897.

A NARRATIVE OF THE TRADITIONS, MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE MOQUIS INDIANS.

Written from the verbal narrative of Elder Ira Hatch, by James A. Little.

INTRODUCTION.

The Moquis occupy six villages, located some distance south of the Colorado River. Elder Hatch estimates the number of inhabitants at about 3,000. Waipile is the name of the principal village.

In accordance with the wisdom and philanthropy which have ever characterized the Indian policy of President Brigham Young, several expeditions have been sent to these villages, their design being to improve the condition of that people by supplying them with useful articles, to teach them the principles of the gospel, and to prepare the way, if possible, for their deliverance from bondage to the surrounding tribes; for they appear to have been subject to forced tribute to the more warlike peoples around them, since a former remnant of their ancestors sought safety from entire destruction in their present places of refuge.

During the visit of a company to them in 1882, commanded by Capt. Jacob Hamblin, they decided to send a deputation of three of their number to Salt Lake City. As hostages for the safe return of this deputation, and to improve their acquaintance with the Moquis and their language, Elders Ira Hatch, Charles Hackett and John McCannell remained until the return of the deputation, in March, 1893, a period of about three months. It is from the verbal narrative of the traditions, manners and customs of this people, the knowledge of which was principally obtained during this sojourn among them, from which this narrative is written.

THE MOQUIS.

The present Moquis people are traditionally said to be the descendants of a people who came from the sea coast in the Southwest. They appear to have no idea of the time that has elapsed since their migration hither. They were rich in cattle and the necessities of life, and understood the manufacture and the use of edge tools, but their children have lost the art of making them. They think that but a few generations have passed away since their ancestors occupied an extensive portion of the country in which they now reside, both north and south of the Colorado; but they were slaughtered and driven by their enemies, until a remnant were compelled to locate in their present places, which are capable of easy defence, compared with the open country. At the time the Pleders drove them across the Colorado, a mutual compact was entered into by the contending parties, that neither of them should ever cross that river. Although the Pleders have broken this treaty long since, when the deputation of the Moquis crossed the Colorado on their way to Salt Lake City, they said they were the first of their people who had broken that treaty.

About four generations ago, the principal chief of the Oriba village and his family are said to have been white. A young man and woman, seen by Elder Hatch, said to be descendants of this chief, were Albino in complexion. It is seldom that very large or small men are seen among the Moquis. They are generally from five feet four inches to five feet ten inches in height, with a fine muscular development, capable of carrying heavy burdens and enduring great fatigue.

They differ from Indians generally in complexion, having dark brown hair and eyes instead of black, and dark skin, but not copper colored.

THEIR RELIGION.

Their religion cannot be strictly called idolatrous, as they do not worship images, but consider them the representations of ideas. Their religious rites and ceremonies appeared to be simple, and at least harmless in their tendencies. They call their deity "Tow-wan-e-na," or Sun Father. They believe that he governs that orb and has the dispensing of his blessings of light and heat. This god is represented by an image, made of wood and stone, of a favorite chief who died more than three generations ago. This personage now resides in the heavens, from which he dispenses the blessings of life, and especially those of rain and fruitful seasons upon the faithful. If his children are not humble and obedient, he punishes them by withholding his blessings.

The How-won-a, or sacred temple, is the head workshop of the village, but at the time of religious ceremonies it is vacated by the laborers and used exclusively for sacred performances. The representative of their deity sits enthroned on a rude pedestal in the north end of the building. Its head and breast are decorated with costly beads and feathers and strings of sacred sea-shells, which were worn by their fathers who came from the sea shore. The eyes of the image are directed to the middle of the floor, where are placed wooden images of all kinds of domestic fowls, such as doves, chickens, etc. These images are painted and decorated with feathers in imitation of nature. By the side of these images of fowls are placed the skins of wild beasts, hung on a pole of the most precious material, among these, that of the fox predominates, as that animal is considered more sacred than others. Corn and water are placed before the fowls.

In worshipping their deity, the men form in rows in front of the image, and speak and sing in his praise, accompanied by the music of rude instruments, among which was a curiously constructed flute, which had descended to them from their forefathers. There was but one religious ceremony in which the women joined with the men. The head workshop is the great central place of worship in a village, but there are other minor ones. The principal religious ceremonies take place in the month of February.

In the centre of the village is a public square, where there is a wide stone altar about two feet high and three feet square. On this, sacrifices of food are laid on sacred days. Among these offerings is a small buckskin sack containing holy meal. Around this altar the men dance in rotation. During this ceremony, the aged men and women of the village take a pinch of the holy meal, breathe on it, sprinkle a little on the backs of the dancers, and throw a

little to the West, East, North and South. This is the signal for the dance to break up.

The ideas and principles of their religion are eminently utilitarian. They dictate all the relations of life. They religiously abhor an indolent man, and order is the first law of every household, and of every public institution and community. They enforce habits of industry by precept, example and exhortation, as is well illustrated by the following anecdote: When Elder Hatch and his companions first visited the Moquis, Ti-lan-ma was the principal chief of the Oriba village. To obtain that position, a man must be noted for his industry, energy and perseverance. From some cause, he became indolent and unthrifty. The people withdrew their confidence from him; he lost his place, and died of starvation and chagrin. Charity is one of the leading principles of their religion. The industrious poor, or the sick and helpless must be amply provided for by the contributions of the more fortunate. (To be Continued.)

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