

Correspondence.

SALT LAKE CITY,
Oct. 30th, 1909.

ED. DESERET NEWS:—Sir—The interest manifest at the present time, in regard to ancient mounds in Utah, leads the writer of this to believe that the following may not be uninteresting.

In the northern part of Arizona Territory, about one hundred and thirty miles east of the Colorado river, resides a peculiar people. They are distinct in almost every custom and habit from their aboriginal neighbors, not intermarrying or associating on familiar terms with any. They reside in houses built with unburned sand-stone. These houses are three stories high. There are nine towns, two of which are deserted and present a very dilapidated condition. The inhabitants went east several years since in search of traditional expectations. The other towns contain from fifty to five hundred citizens each—about sixteen hundred in all. They depend upon agriculture for sustenance, raising a few sheep, from the wool of which they manufacture their clothing. The agricultural products are chiefly Indian corn, squash, beans, peas, watermelons and a few cereals. They also produce an abundance of fine-flavored peaches, which they dry for winter use.

The oldest resident is unable to tell how long since their fathers settled there; that it has been several generations is evinced from the fact that the trails leading from village to village are worn into the solid sand-stone in many places to the depth of three or four feet. The inhabitants travel very little, save it be those who go for salt, which they are constrained to carry on their backs from ninety to one hundred and fifty miles. One may often meet with hoary-headed persons amongst them who assert that they have never been to the nearest village, seven miles distant. The farthest they have ever been from home is to the wild potato patch, three miles away.

The young women grind the corn, using for that purpose the original "mahtah." This consists of a flat stone of from one to two feet in length, and from seven to fourteen inches in width, slightly hollowed out on one side, and a small round stone about eight inches in length and three inches in diameter. The large stone is placed with one end on the ground or floor of the building, (generally in the third story) while the other end is raised to an angle of about thirty-five degrees. The women kneel when grinding, presenting the appearance of wash-women over a washboard. Using the small stone, or crusher, in both hands by rubbing it up and down on the large stone, as a woman does a shirt on a washboard, they succeed in crushing the corn and produce meal that will compare favorably with that of the best flouring mill.

At one of the towns an extensive pottery is carried on, where a variety of earthen ware is manufactured. Vessels, the walls of which do not exceed half an inch in thickness, are sufficiently large to contain eighty gallons, may be seen standing in the store rooms, or granaries, filled with beans or other edibles. The potter supplies every house with a chimney. A number of earthen globes with an aperture at the top and bottom sufficiently large to admit of the smoke passing through, are placed one upon another until they reach above the building, the apertures fitting nicely together so that a continuous opening is formed for the smoke to escape. The potter also produces ware which may be heated to a white heat without injury.

It is not the writer's intention at present, to dwell further on the customs, habits or products of these people, but to relate the following,—one of the many traditions which their old men recite with much feeling and animation:

"Away in the gloomy past their forefathers dwelt north-west of the Colorado River along the shores of a great salt lake, and southward, in pleasant valleys. They were a very numerous and thriving people, but very 'kah-lo-lo-mah' (wicked.) At this time three 'We-wegums' (prophets) appeared amongst them and told them that for their wickedness they would be visited by plagues and the remnant of their people should be driven from the land. They should go to the east and should dwindle away until there would be but few left. They would then be visited by a white people from the west, who would teach them to be wise and good. They should become one with the white people and become a great nation. The prophets remained with them for many days, preaching to them and trying to induce them to do right; but finally left, saying that they would return at some future day."

Where they are gone this people do not know, but they look anxiously yet for their return; for their words thus far have been verified. A short time after the prophets left, the people were stricken with a plague and many died in their houses and remained as they died,—unburied and unwept; for there were none to bury them,—whole towns being desolated. During the prevalence of the plague the Indians (Utahs) from the surrounding mountains came upon them and drove them out and made them go east of the Colorado and agree not to return. The treaty stipulated that they should remain east and the Utahs west of the river. This treaty these people have held sacred, with one exception, to the present time. That exception they look upon with awe and dread, and had it not been that the Utahs have repeatedly violated the treaty by crossing to the east side of the river, they could not have been induced to come west of the Colorado. These traditions, coupled with the unmistakable evidences of there having been, formerly, cities and towns or villages at every available point from Bear river, in the north, to Santa Clara, in the south, lead to the evident conclusion that the Moquis are the last surviving remnant of the once numerous and thriving inhabitants of the ancient mounds of Utah.

M. J. S.

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