

PROCEEDINGS

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1886.

SECTION H.

THE ZUNIS. By JOHN G. BOURKE, Captain
S. Army.

November 17, 1881, during my stay in the
Mexico, the *Nehue-Cue*, one of the secret
ent word to Mr. F. Cushing (whose guests
do us the unusual honor of coming to our
their characteristic dances, which, Cushing
nted.

Governor's family put the long "living"
g the floor and sprinkling it with water to
er dark the dancers entered; they were
being boys. The centre men were naked,
ack breech-clouts of archaic style. The
with a bunch of wild turkey feathers tied
husks over each ear. White bands were
eyes and mouth. Each wore a collar of
en stuff. Broad white bands, one inch
the body at the navel, around the arms
nd knees. Tortoise-shell rattles hung
woollen footless leggings were worn with
n the right hand, each waved a wand
nmed with the plumage of the wild tur-
s were arrayed in old cast-off American
e white cotton night-caps, with corn-
r at top of head and ears. Several
tortoise-shell rattles, strings of brass
was more grotesquely attired than the
gossamer "over all" and a pair of
his eyes. His general "get-up" was
Mexican priest. Another was a very
woman.

oblong drum, and of the rattles and
into the long room, crammed with
of all sizes and ages. Their song
erence to everything and everybody
and myself receiving special at-
erriment of the red-skinned listen-
t one side of the room, seated upon
front of me a rude bench or table
oil lamp. I suppose that in the

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halo diffused by the feeble light and in my "stained-glass at-
titude," I must have borne some resemblance to the pictures of
saints hanging upon the walls of old Mexican churches; to such a
fancied resemblance, I at least attribute the performance which fol-
lowed.

The dancers suddenly wheeled into line, threw themselves on
their knees before my table, and with extravagant beatings of
breast, began an outlandish but faithful mockery of a Mexi-
can Catholic congregation at vespers. One bawled out a parody
upon the Pater Noster, another mumbled along in the manner of
an old man reciting the rosary, while the fellow with the India-
rubber coat jumped up, and began a passionate exhortation or ser-
mon, which for mimetic fidelity was inimitable. This kept the
audience laughing with sore sides for some moments, until at a
signal from the leader, the dancers suddenly countermarched out
of the room, in single file, as they had entered.

An interlude followed of ten minutes, during which the dusty
floor was sprinkled by men who spat water forcibly from their
mouths. The *Nehue-Cue* reentered; this time two of their num-
ber were stark naked. Their singing was very peculiar and
sounded like a chorus of chimney-sweeps, and their dance became
a stiff-legged jump, with heels kept twelve inches apart. After
they had ambled around the room two or three times, Cushing an-
nounced in the Zuni language that a "feast" was ready for them,
at which they loudly roared their approbation and advanced to
strike hands with the munificent "Americanos," addressing us in
a funny gibberish of broken Spanish, English, and Zuni. They
then squatted upon the ground and consumed with zest, large
"ollas" full of tea, and dishes of hard tack and sugar. As they
were about finishing this, a squaw entered, carrying an "olla" of
urine, of which the filthy brutes drank heartily.

I refused to believe the evidence of my senses, and asked Cush-
ing if that were really human urine. "Why, certainly," replied he,
"and here comes more of it." This time it was a large tin pailful,
not less than two gallons. I was standing by the squaw as she
offered this strange and abominable refreshment. She made a
motion with her hand to indicate to me that it was urine, and one
of the old men repeated the Spanish word *mear* (to urinate), while
my sense of smell demonstrated the truth of their statements.

The dancers swallowed great draughts, smacked their lips, and,

amid the roaring merriment of the spectators, remarked that it was very, very good. The clowns were now upon their mettle, each trying to surpass his neighbors in feats of nastiness. One swallowed a fragment of corn-husk, saying he thought it very good and better than bread; his vis à vis attempted to chew and gulp down a piece of filthy rag. Another expressed regret that the dance had not been held out of doors, in one of the plazas; there they could show what they could do. There, they always made it a point of honor to eat the excrement of men and dogs.

For my own part I felt satisfied with the omission, particularly as the room, stuffed with one hundred Zunis, had become so foul and filthy as to be almost unbearable. The dance, as good luck would have it, did not last many minutes, and we soon had a chance to run into the refreshing night air.

To this outline description of a disgusting rite I have little to add. The Zunis, in explanation, stated that the *Nehue-Cue* were a Medicine Order which held these dances from time to time to inure the stomachs of members to any kind of food, no matter how revolting. This statement may seem plausible enough when we understand that religion and medicine among primitive races are almost always one and the same thing; or at least so closely intertwined that it is a matter of difficulty to decide where one begins and the other ends.

Religion in its dramatic ceremonial preserves, to some extent, the history of the particular race in which it dwells. Among nations of high development, miracles, moralities and passion plays have taught, down to our own day, in object lessons, the sacred history in which the spectators believed. Some analogous purpose may have been held in view by the first organizers of the urine dance. In their early history, the Zunis and other Pueblos suffered from constant warfare with savage antagonists and with each other. From the position of their villages, long sieges must of necessity have been sustained, in which sieges, famine and disease, no doubt, were the allies counted upon by the investing forces. We may have in this abominable dance a tradition of the extremity to which the Zunis of the long ago were reduced at some unknown period. A similar catastrophe in the history of the Jews is intimated in II Kings, xviii, 27. "But Rab-shakeh said unto them: hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee to speak these words? hath he not sent me to the

men which sit on the wall, that they may *drink their own piss* with you?" In the came across a reference to a very similar d one of the fanatical sects of the Arabian B in which it was recorded, the London L fortunately mislaid.

As illustrative of the tenacity with which once adopted by a sect will adhere to it upon its life, long after the motives which mended it have vanished in oblivion, let from Max Muller's "Chips from a German upon the Parsees," pp. 163-164, Scribner's

"The *Nirang* is the urine of cow, ox or bing of it over the face and hands is the does after getting out of bed. Either before to the face and hands, or while it remains or applied, he should not touch anything dirt but, in order to wash out the *Nirang*, he either pour water on his hands, or resorts to the of the pot through the intervention of a pi handkerchief, or his *sudra*, i. e., his blouse. on his hand, then takes the pot in that hand, face and feet." (Quoting from D. scription of the Parsees.)

Continuing, Max Muller says: "Strange a cation may appear, it becomes perfectly dis told that women, after childbirth, have not sacred ablution, but actually to drink a litt that the same rite is imposed on children at vestiture with the *Sudra* and *Koshti*, the b urian faith."

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 from Max Muller's "Chips from a German workshop," "Essay
 upon the Parsees," pp. 163-164, Scribner's Edition, 1869.

"The *Nirang* is the urine of cow, ox or she-goat, and the rub
 bing of it over the face and hands is the second thing a Parsee
 does after getting out of bed. Either before applying the *Nirang*
 to the face and hands, or while it remains on the hands after being
 applied, he should not touch anything directly with his hands;
 but, in order to wash out the *Nirang*, he either asks somebody else
 to pour water on his hands, or resorts to the device of taking hold
 of the pot through the intervention of a piece of cloth, such as a
 handkerchief, or his *sudra*, i. e., his blouse. He first pours water
 on his hand, then takes the pot in that hand and washes his other
 hand, face and feet." (Quoting from *Dadabhai-Nadrosi's* De
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Continuing, Max Muller says: "Strange as this process of purifi
 cation may appear, it becomes perfectly disgusting when we are
 told that women, after childbirth, have not only to undergo this
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 trian faith."