

a dozen by themselves scattered along the wall. There was also a pot containing several striped ribbon-snakes, too lively to be left at large. Eight or ten priests, some old, some young, sat on the floor in the lower and larger two-thirds of the room, and greeted me with grave courtesy; they spread a blanket on the edge of the dais, and I sat down with my back to the snakes and about eight feet from them; a little behind and to one side of me sat a priest with a kind of fan or brush made of two or three wing plumes of an eagle who kept quiet guard over his serpent wards. At the farther end of the room was the altar; the rude picture of a coyote was painted on the floor, and on the four sides paintings of snakes; on three sides it was hemmed in by lightning-sticks standing upright in little clay cups, and on the fourth side by eagle plumes held similarly erect. Some of the priests were smoking—for pleasure, not ceremonially—and they were working at parts of the ceremonial dress. One had a cast rattlesnake skin which he was chewing, to limber it up, just as Sioux squaws used to chew buckskin. Another was fixing a leather apron with pendant thongs; he stood up and tried it on. All were scantily clad, in breech-clouts or short kilts or lion flaps; their naked red bodies, lithe and sinuey, shone, and each had been splashed in two or three places with a blotch or streak of white paint. One spoke English and translated freely; I was careful not to portray much curiosity or touch on any matter which they might be reluctant to discuss. The snakes behind me never rattled or showed any signs of anger; the translator volunteered the remark that they were peaceable because they had been given medicine—whatever that might mean, supposing the statement be true according to the sense in which the words are accepted to plainmen. But several of them were active in the sluggish rattle snake fashion. One glided sinuously toward me; when he was a yard away, I pointed him out to the watcher with the eagle feathers; the watcher quietly extended the feathers and stroked and pushed the snake's head back, until it finally turned and crawled back to the wall. Half a dozen times different snakes thus crawled out towards us and were turned back, without their ever displaying a symptom of irritation. One snake got past the watcher, whereupon the priest in front of it checked its advance by throwing pinches of dust in its face until the watcher turned round with his feather scepter. Every move was made without hurry and with quiet unconcern; neither snake nor man, at any time, showed a trace of worry or anger; all, human beings and reptiles, were in an atmosphere of quiet peacefulness. When I rose to say good-by, I thanked my hosts for their courtesy; they were pleased, and two or three shook hands with me.

On the afternoon of the following day, August 20, the antelope priests—the men of the Antelope clan—held their dance. The snake