

the hooting of an owl, came pealing through the chamber, and a couple of musicians who were stationed near the altar began beating a huge drum, with a sound like rolling thunder, as a procession of dark figures came down the ladder and filed slowly up the long room, chanting in solemn chorus as they came. These were delegates belonging to the common class of the Zuni soldiery—the "rank and file," composed of young men who had passed their trial and were qualified warriors, but who had not yet attained to a degree of rank which would entitle them to participate in the preceding ceremonies.

They circled around the youthful candidates, and pairing off into couples, as the rolling of the drum grew louder and yet louder till it filled the chamber with a deafening roar, they marched back down the room and each took up a torch of cedar splints from a pile before the hearth, which he lighted at the fire. The elder warriors and the medicine men, or priests of the martial order, struck up the chant and joined the procession, two by two, and supplied themselves with torches like the rest, all save two, grave, stalwart men—and one was Attawano's father—who came behind the boys, and drawing their arms back, stood and held them as though they were expected to resist or endeavor to escape.

"You need not hold me, uncle," said Inhadi, very proudly. "I promise you I will not flinch nor move. I am not afraid."

He looked at Attawano and was glad to see that his cousin stood unmoved, having evidently braced himself to bear what might be coming. He also said he could stand to his ordeal without being compelled, but as no attention was paid to their protests the candidates accepted this as a customary part of the proceedings and silently submitted. They stood with beating hearts but steady bearing while the young warriors marched back toward them, two abreast, waving the flaming torches in circles around their heads. Some of them were but little older than the youthful candidates, well-known companions of their daily sports, and Inhadi said to himself, as Attawano had said to him, that he would sooner die than permit them to behold a sign of terror in his countenance.

As the foremost couple drew near, one of them whirled his torch as if to dash it into Inhadi's face, while the other menaced Attawano in the same manner. For one instant Attawano seemed to shrink; but a glance of warning from his cousin's eye quickly recalled his wavering self control.

The next moment Inhadi forced himself to repress a cry that rose to his own lips, as the burning brand was swept into his face and extinguished by a thrust into his mouth! He was half choked and half blinded—but silent. Attawano, equally taken by surprise,

had made no sound. The two inquisitors passed on and laid their charred torches on the altar, and two others advanced to repeat the same performance. This time the candidates were prepared, and all the warriors ranged in line came forward, two together, and put out their torches in the mouths of these young neophytes.

It was a long line, for the Zuni order of war consists of twelve degrees, or grades of rank, and each grade was represented by a number of delegates; but never once did either of the youths allow a sign of pain or fright to be detected in his bearing. The mystic meaning of this uncomfortable ceremony was explained in the chant, and they understood it to signify that they were thus "fire-tested" and could henceforth be relied upon to withstand the influence of demons who are ever striving to put fear into the hearts of warriors and make them lose their honor. Also, their mouths were fortified against the wickedness of falsehood, which, according to the Zuni code, is almost as vile as cowardice.

When this rite was finished and the last extinguished torch was laid upon the altar, the wild chant was silenced, the drums ceased their beating, the members of the council returned to their former places, while the younger warriors remained in the middle of the room, and the two chiefs who had been holding the arms of Attawano and Inhadi now released them. Attawano stood silent, awaiting what might next occur; but Inhadi straightened up with a defiant air, and smiling at his uncle, demanded, though he could scarcely speak—

"Is that all?"

"No, my son," said the old warrior, calmly; "there is more to come."

He led the boys behind the altar and gave a signal to the young warriors who stood waiting. Immediately they dashed at the fire, and partly with poles and partly with their naked hands dragged out the glowing embers and strewed a track of hot ashes and live coals across the entire length of the stone-paved council chamber, from the fireplace to the altar.

Then they ranged themselves in two long rows, forming a line on either side of this fiery pathway, and the war chief, Attawano's father, took one of the charred torches and gave it to his son, while the medicine chief handed one to Inhadi.

"Go light these torches again," he said, "and give them to the braves who stand the first in line—yours to the right, Inhadi, and yours, Attawano, to the left. Then return to the altar and take each another torch, and so come and go till the braves are supplied with torches as before. Go!"

He motioned with his hand toward that smoking track, which the young initiates must traverse with