

The Ceremony is over etc - copy all of Actium.
lost part.

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It is difficult indeed to give even an idea of the
subtle beauty and charm of this play. The tinge
of reality given by the chaste actors is enhanced
and ⁵⁰⁰ ~~made~~ ^{etherealized} ~~stronger~~ by the distance ^{between} the audience
~~removed~~ ^{and} from the stage. It is this perhaps that
gives one the sensation of looking down on forgotten
ages from some far off star. ³³

Sixty years have passed. The Youth is now the Elder Chief Fire Priest. He was indeed tried by the Gods but remembered the words of the Corn-Maidens that everything in life is beautiful. But as the "night of darkness and the dawn-light", so "Sorrow and gladness meeting, joining one another" form the whole of life's circle.

The old Fire Priest is the sage of his people. Again it is the time of the new Fire Ceremony. It is the evening of the first day.

* It is the belief of the people that once a year they must start a new fire. ¹⁰⁰⁰ This fire must never be allowed to go out until the end of the year when the new fire is kindled. To them everything that has life has fire so their symbolism is significant.

The action of this scene is filled with the symbolic beauty of the Fire Ceremony. Many of their rites are performed and the scene ends with the Navajo Fire dances.

When acting this scene the students forget that an audience is watching across the canyon, & they perform their ceremonies and dances with all the seriousness that they do when alone.

THE DREAM PICTURES OF MY PEOPLE.

"The Dream Pictures of My People"--These were the words of an old Navajo Chief as he looked down upon the Indian Play "Fire" in the ruin of one of the ancient Cliff Dwellings at the Mesa Verde National Park. No words could more adequately express what he saw, for it was a vision, and of the substance of dreams.

Alleen Nusbaum, wife of the Superintendent of the Park, is a dreamer of dreams, and a dreamer who makes her dreams come true. Even the casual visitor at the Mesa Verde cannot but picture to himself those age old ruins as they must have been in the days when they were the homes of an ancient race. To Mrs. Nusbaum's mind these visions must present themselves in constant succession. So it was but a natural sequence of events that she should desire to present some sort of pageant or play which would give to others a living picture of her dreams. But the charm and beauty with which she has done it!

The substance of the play which Mrs. Nusbaum gave at intervals during the summer of 1925 was based on the ancient fire ceremony of the Pueblo and Navajo Indians. These ceremonies are known to have existed in the Cliff Dweller period, and her presentation is authentic archaeologically. Baron Nordenskiöld, an early Swedish explorer is said to have found the mummy of a young girl, wrapped in a robe of bluebird feathers, in a Cliff Dwelling ruin near the Mesa Verde. With this romantic discovery, together with many symbols and customs of the fire ceremony which have been so carefully studied by Dr. Fewkes and other noted archaeologists, Mrs. Nusbaum has woven her play.

Her stage is Spruce Tree House, the charming ruin snugly built in a natural cave in the side of a narrow canyon. Her players are the Navajo Indians who work in the Park during the summer. Her audience sits on the rim of the canyon looking down and across into the ruin in the opposite wall.

As the audience waits in the clear star-lit night, a voice near by begins.....

*" ' After the roar, after the fierce modern music
Of rivets and hammers and trams,
After the shout of the giants
Youthful and brawling and strong
Building the cities of men,
Here is the desert of silence
Blinking and blind in the sun.....! "

Here is the land of enchantment, of mystery..
and when the world was not so old as now, a
people lived on this Mesa. A wonderful people,
strong, and brave and beautiful.
We are going to turn back the pages of time to
night, not to yesterday, but to a thousand
yesterdays. You will hear.....

'The noise of passing feet-
Is it men or gods
Who come out of the silence? ' "

A Youth climbs to the mountain top. He has set
out alone, as is the custom, to try his spirit.
After a weary climb he plants the prayer sticks,
and chants and dances until he falls from ex-
haustion. He hears a voice. Two Corn-Maidens
appear to him. One gives him a robe made of
bluebird feathers, and speaks to him of the full-
ness of life
nature.

* Quotation from Alice Corbin's "Red Earth"

* Quotations from "The Voice" are condensed from Mrs.

This is a brief summary of what the audience hears in the stillness of the night. Then, on the Mesa top across the Canyon, a dim light is seen. As it grows brighter the on-lookers see the Indian youth, hear his chant, see his dance, his vision.....and all is darkness again.

The voice continues.....

"The youth returns to the village and tells his clan of his vision, and shows them the blue feather robe. They believe him chosen by the gods to hold a high place among them, and they begin his instruction so that he may take the place of the next younger fire priest.

Four years pass. It is the afternoon of the day before the summer fire ceremony. The youth is to personate the Fire-God for the first time. Women are busy finishing their pottery and making wafer bread. The bread must be placed in the pots while they are being fired to feed the spirits of the pots. The youth is to marry the maiden of his choice with the next moon. She runs to him followed by her mother who scolds her for having forgotten to place the wafer bread in her pot. A dreadful punishment is predicted for her by the other women.

The Speaker Chief calls from his tower to tell his people that their fires must be extinguished before sun down. The men must go to their kivas, the women and children to their houses where they must remain until dawn the next day."

The fires begin to flicker, and presently the audience sees the ruin below. This time not a ruin in spirit, but a living village, bathed in a warm red glow of light, and they watch the action of what has just been read to them. The lights grow dim, go out..... the voice continues.....

"The village is in darkness except for the small fire watched over by the two Planter Priests. The Horn Priests go through the village symbolically closing all the paths with a trail of sacred meal. No one is allowed to cross this mark, the penalty being death.

The Fire-God puts out the fire and goes with the priests and warriors to spend the night on the Mesa top. No one has noticed the maiden who has stolen out to watch her lover as he personates the Fire-God."

Again the scene is beheld and the strange chanting of the priests is heard with wonder.

"Dawn. The chant of the returning priests and warriors is heard far away. They are returning from the Mesa top bringing with them the idol of the Germ-God for the Fire Ceremony. The Horn Priests appear. They open the paths that were closed by the sacred meal. They discover the foot prints of the maiden. She is brought before the Old Fire Priest. He kills her. The youth comes as the Fire-God. He sees her and slowly covers her with his blue feather robe. They all go to the kivas. The Corn-Maidens appear, and bring the maiden to life, and take her away."

The mystery of the chant of the priests is finally heard far down the Canyon. It grows louder as the priests and warriors return to the village. The file of figures is at last dimly seen as it enters the ruin.

The voice in the darkness continues....

"Sixty years have passed. Theyouth is now the Chief Fire Priest. His spirit was indeed tried by the Gods, but he remembered the words of the Corn-Maidens who had told him that everything in life was beautiful. But as the 'Night of darkness and the dawn-light' so 'sorrow and gladness meeting, joining one another' form the whole of life's circle.

The old Fire Priest is the sage of his people. Again it is the time of the New Fire Ceremony. It is the evening of the first day."

The action of this scene is filled with the symbolic beauty of the Fire Ceremony. Many of the rites are performed and the scene contains several famous dances of the Indianã. In acting this scene the Indians forget that an audience is watching in the darkness from across the canyon, and they perform their ceremonies and dances with all the seriousness with which they do them when alone.

It is the belief of these Indians that once a year they must start a new fire which must never be extinguished until the end of the year when the new fire is kindled. To them all that has life has "fire", so their various symbolisms are full of significance. This ceremony is performed among certain tribes to-day just as it was centuries ago.

The Blue birds, the Corn-Maidens, and the Germ-God, (the same as the Sun-God or Fire-God) are always connected in Indian legend. The Blue Bird brings spring, hence warmth and life. The Corn-Maidens are the dieties of corn, fertility,-- life. The Sun-God and the Fire-God both represent warmth and life, therefore they are the same as the Germ-God.

Mrs. Nusbaum has obtained many legends from the Indians direct. She has found that the legends of the different tribes dovetail in a most interesting fashion. These Indian tales are beautiful and poetic. It requires endless patience and tact to obtain them as the Indian is very reticent in telling his beliefs and stories to the white man.

The voice....

"The Ceremony is over. The men have gone to their kivas, the women to their homes. Only the Old Fire Priest is left praying over the dim fire. Slowly he chants...

*'From the base of the East,
From the base of La Plata Peaks,
From the house made of mirage,
From the door-way of rainbow,
From the path out of which is the rainbow
To my fire side
Will come the Corn-Maidens.

The Talking-God sits with me,
The House-God sits with me.
Pollen-Boy sits with me.
Grasshopper-Girl sits with me.

Beautifully my fire to me is restored.
Beautifully white corn to me is restored.
Beautifully yellow corn to me is restored.
Beautifully blue corn to me is restored.
Beautifully corn of all kinds to me is restored.
In beauty may I walk,
All day long may I walk,
Through the returning seasons may I walk,
On the trail marked with pollen,
With dew about my feet,
With beauty may I walk.

*From "Song of the Earth". Navajo. Arranged from the original by Mrs. Jesse L. Nusbaum.

With beauty before me,
With beauty behind me,
With beauty above me,
With beauty below me,
With beauty all around me, may I walk.

Beautifully my fields to me are restored,
Beautifully my house to me is restored,
Beautifully my young wife to me is restored.
It is finished in beauty,
It is finished in beauty.'

The Corn-Maidens appear leading the maiden in her marriage robes. Age falls from the old Chief Fire-Priest and he joins the maiden, a youth....' It is finished in beauty' "

It is difficult indeed to give even an idea of the subtle beauty and charm of this play.. The setting of the Mesa Verde, the canyon, the ancient ruin, give an atmosphere that cannot be produced on any stage.. The tinge of reality given by the Indian actors, is both enhanced and etherealized by the distance between the audience and the stage. It is this perhaps, which gives one the sensation of looking down on forgotten ages from some far off star.

Laura Gilpin.
Colorado Springs, Colorado.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

1. Spruce Tree House, the stage.
2. The youth prays on the Mountain Top.
3. The youth tells of his Vision.
4. The House of the Cliff Dweller,
5. Making the Wafer Bread of the Pot.
6. The Planter Priests watch over the fire.
7. The Maiden steals out to watch the Fire-God.
8. The Fire Ceremony.
9. The youth kindles the new fire.
10. The Priest awaits the coming of the Corn-Maidens.