ACOMA AND THE ENCHANTED MESA.

By G. WHARTON JAMES.

THERE is a wonderful fund of fascinating lore connected with our Southwest, that, as yet, has been but cursorily explored. The ancient history, mythology, and traditions of the Pueblo Indians, their folk lore, their ceremonies, their songs, are all as full of interest to the student as the myths of Greece or the lore of ancient Italy. Then, too, when the scenic qualities of the country are considered, the vast deserts, the glorious, snow-crowned mountains, the majestic forests, the mysterious canyons, the inaccessible mesas, the varied rock carvings of nature, all these, and many others, our Southwest becomes a region of extraordinary fascination and unusual profit to the student.

And few places repay investigation and observation better than Acoma, the City of the Cliffs. Here is an island Gibraltar, but without any circumscribing ocean. In the heart of a beautiful valley stands this wonderful rock, upon which the Tuéres people, centuries ago, established their pueblo. To the world of white men it was discovered by Coronado, just after his great disappointment at Zuni, where he had hoped to find the stored-up wealth of the mythical "Seven Cities of Cibola." This was in July, 1540. Still eager for gold he sent an expedition northward, which discovered the Snake Dancing Moki and the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River. A wound which he had received compelled him to remain at Zuni, and Hernando de Alvarado with twenty men was sent eastward to investigate the rumors that were rife about remarkable cities to be found thitherward. In five days after leaving Zuni, Alvarado gazed on Acoma—the first white man ever dazzled by its peerless situation. Never since has an intelligent being stood at the base of those cliffs without experiencing deep and uncontrollable emotions. Castañeda, the historian of Coronado's expedition, says Acoma is situated upon "a perpendicular rock," and that is true, but, like some later writers, he stretched the truth more than a little when he said that the only way to reach the summit was by means of a stairway of three hundred steps, hewn out of the solid rock.

In general appearance there is no doubt that the cliffs of Acoma were just the same when Coronado's forces saw them as they are to-day, but in our photograph (Fig. 1) the addition of the more recent church will be noted. Walk around this mesa, as I have done many times, and enjoy the rocky sculpturings and the striking mural faces it presents. All around, it is inaccessible, impregnable, except where the four trails constructed by the Tuéres have made its ascent possible. Towers, buttresses, battlements, bridges innumerable stand in conscious majesty as nature's guards to the home of this quiet and peaceful people.

And yet not in Coronado's day, but later, it saw many and dreadful scenes of bloodshed. For, fifty-eight years after Alvarado's advent, and long after Coronado and his expedition had returned, disheartened and discredited, to Old Mexico, Juan de Oñate, the real conqueror of Arizona and New Mexico, came to receive anew the submission of the people of this "City of the Cliffs." Treachery was in the hearts of the principals when they solemnly pledged themselves to be true and submissive vassals to the crown of Spain. They were diplomats of an early American era. To them, the end justified the means, and lies and treachery were legitimate weapons in dealing with hostile forces of such overwhelming power.

Having subscribed to the oath, the Acomas invited Juan de Oñate to climb the steep and perilous trails and visit the city whose submission he had received. After gazing upon its scenes of interest, he was taken to the head of a ladder, which led into the depths of one of the underground ceremonial chambers, termed *kivas* by the Indians, but afterward named *estufas*, or stoves, by the Spaniards, on account of their stifling heat. Would he go below and see the ceremonial chamber? Just as he was about to descend, the darkness below sent a shaft of suspicion into his fearless heart, and he refused to go. Well for him was it that he let prudence control his acts at that time; for, in the darkness of the *kiva* a score or more of armed warriors were stealthily in waiting, watching for his steps upon the ladder, and, ere he had reached the bottom, a score of willing hands would have been dyed in his life blood, while armed men above would ruthlessly have murdered his little band of followers.

A few weeks later Oñate's maestro de campo, Juan de Zaldivar, who had been exploring eastward, came to Acoma with his thirty men, and, lured by the peaceful protestations of the Acomas, left fourteen of his men below to guard the horses, and then, with sixteen men, climbed the trail. With quiet stealth and under most friendly guise, Zaldivar and his men were scattered, when suddenly, like the whirling cyclone from the heavens above, all the warriors of the town fell upon the hapless Spaniards with flint knives, stone battle axes, heavy hammers, bows and arrows, and war clubs. Surprised, apart, unready, these adventurous warriors, who had braved the savages of thousands of miles of desert marches, one by one were slain. Here would be seen a desperate but hopeless conflict; a mailed warrior, back to wall, blood streaming through his broken helmet, surrounded by yelling, screeching, howling, naked savages, all attacking at once and with a ferocity altogether irresistible. Juan was slain, others of his officers and men, one by one, licked the barren rock in the agonies of death, and, at last, five soldiers only remained. Fortunately, they were able to get together, and thus, side by side, encouraging each other, they fought, striking and thrusting at every good opportunity into the dusky mass of surging savagery which determinedly forced itself upon them. Back, foot by foot, they were driven. Step by step they came nearer to the edge of those frightful cliffs. Yet death at the foot of a yawning precipice was preferable to captivity, torture, and horrible death at the hands of ruthless savages; so, cheering each other with brave words, these daring and desperate men flung themselves over the brink and commended their bodies and souls to Santiago, the patron saint of Spain. Courage and bravery were rewarded in all but one, who, falling on the solid rocks, was dashed to pieces. The other four, fortunately, breaking their fall on the soft, ever-changing sand heaps, escaped with their lives, and were soon in the helpful and soothing care of their comrades. The fear

of their horses kept the camp below from the attacks they dreaded, and, just as soon as the wounded soldiers were able to travel, the little, sad-hearted band hastily set forth, some for the main army of Juan de Oñate, at San Gabriel de los Caballeros, the second city founded on United States territory, and others to give warning to the scattered Spaniards at Zuni, Moki and elsewhere to gather together at San Gabriel for mutual protection.

When Oñate heard the news, a determination for vengeance fired his soul. With seventy men he sent Zaldivar's brother, Vicente, to make his vengeful anger felt upon the Acomas. And would that I had space here to tell of that storming of the hitherto impregnable citadel. For three days and nights the battle raged. Deeds of daring and heroism were performed that well deserve to become famed. Step by step the ascent was made; blood was shed like water, scores of Indians lost their lives, and still the fight continued. But determined to avenge their comrades' treacherous murder, the soldiers of Vicente fought with a quiet, desperate valor that could know no defeat. There was but one alternative to victory, and that was death.

At last the rock itself was gained; then the town must be stormed. The one howitzer they had brought was put into use and the adobe walls blown down; fire aided the attacking forces, and at last the chief warriors sued for peace and offered to surrender. Dearly was Juan de Zaldivar slain, for it cost the Acomas the greater portion of their fighting men. In 1680 another uprising took place, when the Spaniards were entirely driven out of New Mexico and kept at bay for nearly eighteen years. Then Diego de Vargas, a daring Spanish cavalier, came as the reconqueror, and more scenes of battle and bloodshed were witnessed.

But now Acoma is quiet and peaceful. Last fall, and in the spring, and the falls and springs for years prior, I have walked in peace on these wind-swept rocky heights, looked down over the precipices where Zaldivar's soldiers leaped, and fearlessly climbed up and down the dizzy trails so furiously defended against the ascent of the avenging Vicente de Zaldivar. I have slept, unarmed and unwatched, without thought of danger, indoors and out of doors, where Acoma and Spaniard once fought in deathly conflict.

And far away in the silent night, often and again, have I gazed upon that equally impressive rocky mesa named by the Acomas *Katzimo*, and known by the white people as the "Mesa Encantada," or the "Enchanted Mesa." All are familiar with its story, viz., that it was once the home of the Acomas, and that a frightful storm and flood came which washed away all means of access to the summit. This the Acomas took as proof of the anger of those above; it was accursed, *Katzimo*, and henceforth must not be touched by the foot of man. Twelve years, or so, ago, the story was interestingly written, but writer and all visitors agreed that the mesa was inaccessible, so that none could tell whether the tradition was true or not.

Dr. William Libbey, of Princeton University, a well trained expert in scientific work, a geologist of lifelong training, a specialist in such work, who had spent weeks and months in the field for thirty years or more, determined to ascend the inaccessible height, and, providing for the maximum of difficulty, easily succeeded by means of line-throwing cannon and boatswain's chair in reaching the summit—the first white man in history to stand upon the sacred heights of *Katzimo*.

Later, Prof. F. W. Hodge, of the Bureau of Ethnology, of Washington, D. C., an equally well trained specialist in field work, made the ascent in much easier manner. Both gentlemen reported that no walls, foundations, or other ruins of dwellings were discoverable; only a few pieces of pottery, and other artifacts of Indian manufacture were picked up, and the remnants of an old trail leading to the summit were discernible, yet both arrived at different conclusions. Dr. Libbey says this is not *Katzimo*, Prof. Hodge says it is.

To my mind the question to be decided is: Does anything on the summit or near the Mesa Encantada bear out the centuries-old tradition of the Acomas that this was once the home of their ancestors?

And this point, I think, it will be conceded, must be settled by one or more of the following:

1. By discovery of ruins on the Mesa large enough to account for the residence of a whole people.

2. By discovery of such evidences of occupation by large numbers of people as to reasonably satisfy the seeker, if the ruins mentioned in proposition one are absent.

3. By satisfactorily accounting for the absence of either ruins or direct evidences of occupation, if neither are found.

The importance of settling the discussion in a legitimate manner is evident to the student of Indian lore and tradition. It is readily apparent that, if this tradition is discredited, a first and great step is taken toward discrediting all Indian tradition, and thus another obstacle is placed in the way of arriving at reasonably accurate conclusions in regard to the prehistoric life of all Indian peoples. So, personally, I am profoundly anxious that the main and important features of the *Katzimo* tradition of Acoma should be preserved in all their integrity and fullness, and ultimately demonstrated, beyond all question, to be true.

That evidences of human presence were found on *Katzimo* all agree, but there is a vast difference between evidences of human presence and evidence that a large village or city was once here occupied.

Had the Acomas lived on the Mesa Encantada, several things are morally certain. These are:

1. They undoubtedly would have built their houses as elsewhere in this region we find mesa cities built, viz., not of adobe, which would have to be carried by arduous labor from the village beneath, but of the chips and pieces or blocks of sandstone left by erosion on the mesa top and on side terraces, easily accessible and far more suitable than adobe.

Ruins of such cities are found all through this region on mesas. On the mesa just above the Cibolleta ranch is a large circular fort ruin, with a circumference of nearly a thousand feet, built of sandstone, and in a fair state of preservation. About fifteen miles further west is another ruin on a mesa overlooking the lava fields. A wall 150 feet long (or more) crosses the mesa, and behind it is a large area covered with ruins. On the top parts of El Morro, or Inscription Rock, are also two stone ruins covering moderate sized areas. All

these ruins are in a fair state of preservation, as the accompanying photographs show.

2. Had such a city existed on Mesa Encantada, the ruins undoubtedly would have remained exactly as in the cases referred to. I do not think large blocks and pieces of sandstone would have been eroded or washed away. The sloping condition of the Mesa Encantada summit is by no means unusual. The Circular Ruins at Cibolleta are on a sloping mesa, so also are the other two sets of ruins mentioned. And yet, according to the Indian traditions recounted to me both at Acoma and Zuni, and verified by Navajos, Moki, and Lagunas, all these ruins are as ancient (or more so) as the ruins of Acoma would have been had they occupied *Katzimo*.

3. Another matter of importance should be considered. The village of the Acomas in the early days must necessarily have been much larger than the modern Acoma. For Juan de Oñate estimated its population at 3,000, and Villagra in his epic says it was 6,000 when the attack of Capt. Vicente de Zaldivar took place on January 22, 1599. Only 600 of these people remained after the conflict. The present day population of Acoma is less than 600, and yet six or more large blocks of three-storied houses are all occupied in housing them on their present site. Now, taking the population of 3,000 of Oñate's estimate—leaving Villagra's estimate out of the question—and then reducing the number to 2,000, or even 1,000, it is apparent that a large number of buildings would have been required to house them, even according to early Pueblo methods, and such a town would neither blow away nor wash away easily, or during many times many furious storms. That a half a score or more of such ruined cities still exist on wind, cloud, rain, and storm-swept mesa summits almost, if not equally, as exposed as the Mesa Encantada city (had it existed) would have been, nullifies, I would venture to suggest, that hypothesis.

Hence my own conclusions, viz.:

1. That while Mesa Encantada was undoubtedly the scene many times of human presence; and,

2. While the worn trail and other evidences clearly demonstrate that the Indians have often visited it, these facts ought not to be accepted as conclusive evidence of the truth of our interpretation of the Acoma tradition, viz., that their ancient city was once located here.

3. And that, in my opinion, both Indian and white man are at fault in regard to the exact location of *Katzimo*, and that further research will yet discover it and show far more positive and ocular demonstration of its having been the occupied site of a large city than the so-called *Katzimo* and Mesa Encantada of the present discussion has done. My reasons for advancing this last idea are:

1. My firm belief in the general truth and reliability of the tradition.

2. The unsatisfactory evidence adduced in favor of the village occupancy of the mesa hitherto known as the Mesa Encantada.

3. My knowledge of the possibility of error, both by Indian and white, owing to the lapse of centuries, in determining the location.

4. My actual conversations with Indians of Acoma, who definitely assert that the sealed mesa is not their *Katzimo*, and that "may be so" some day they will conduct me to the real, genuine, sole, and only *Katzimo* or Mesa Encantada, where many ruins are to be found.

PLANT HUNTING BY THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS.

WE have historical proofs and actual records to show that in Egypt, at any rate, plant collecting abroad (i. e., in Arabia) took place thousands of years before the Christian era, says Amateur Gardening. Now let us glance at the actual evidence. On the walls of a room in the great Temple of Karnac at Thebes, there exist, perhaps, the earliest art records of plants existing in the world to-day. A series of exquisite carvings or sculptures adorn the walls, and these are representations of foreign plants collected and brought home by Thothmes III. on his triumphant return from a campaign in Arabia. These sculptured records show not only the natural aspect of plant or tree, but leaves and flowers; fruits or seed pods are shown separately, as in our modern botanical works of to-day. Mr. W. Flinders Petrie, the well-known Egyptian explorer and archaeologist, has taken casts and photographs of these wonderful old records, and some of these may be seen in the museum at Cairo, in the British Museum, and elsewhere. These sculptured pictures, for some were colored originally, must not be confounded with the actual dried specimens of Egyptian garden and wild plants that have been found preserved in the mummy wrappings of Ahmes I., Rameses II., and other great men, and in the graves discovered at Dalschur, Sahkara, and Hier el Bahara. These actual flowers consisted of blue and white lotus, poppies, narcissus, grasses, palms, clover, barley, juniper, and other plants which grew and flourished at least 2,000 years before our Saviour was born at Bethlehem! Samples of these actual flowers as used in the funeral wreaths of Egypt 4,000 years ago may be seen in the museum at Cairo, as well as in the British Museum and at Kew.

But let us return for a moment to the stone pictures of Thothmes III., whose name can be spelt twenty or thirty different ways. In Rawlinson's "Ancient Egypt," p. 196, he says: "Thothmes noted all that was strange or unusual in the lands which he visited, and sought to introduce the various novelties into his own proper country. His artists had instructions to make careful studies of the objects and to represent them faithfully on his monuments. We see on these water lilies as high as trees, plants of a growth like cacti, all sorts of trees and shrubs, leaves, flowers, and fruits, including melons and pomegranates." Birds and beasts, also; herons and sparrowhawks, geese and doves are fairly mixed up together. Above all, however, let us read the inscription or legend Thothmes put up alongside his stone picture gallery: "Thus saith the King, I swear by the Sun, and I call to witness my Father Ammon, that all is plain truth, there is no trace of deception in that which I have done. What the splendid soil brings forth in the way of productions I have had portrayed in these pictures, with the intention of offering them to my Father Ammon as a memorial for all time."

Could anything be plainer put in our British Mu-

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A GENERAL VIEW OF ACOMA, SHOWING TOWER OF OLD CHURCH AND THE MESA ENCANTADA.

OLD ACOMA CHURCH FROM FOOT OF MESA.

HEWN SANDSTONE WALL, CIBOLLETA MESA, NEW MEXICO.

THE MESA TAI-YO-AL-A-NE, NEAR ZUNI. At the foot was the village discovered by Coronado.

THE MESA ENCANTADA FROM THE NORTH.

SACRED ROCKS ON TAI-YO-AL-A-NE, NEAR ZUNI.

PICTURESQUE NEW MEXICO.